

The
STILL
SMALL
VOICE

By
REV.
GEO. PARDINGTON
PH.D.



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THE STILL SMALL VOICE

QUIET HOUR TALKS

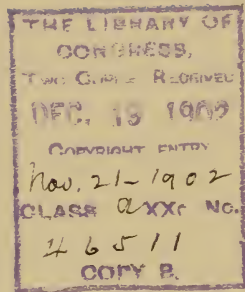
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REV. G. P. PARDINGTON, Ph.D.

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TO
MY WIFE

My genial critic and sympathetic helper in its preparation this volume of "Quiet Hour Talks" is affectionately dedicated.

PREFACE

This little volume of devotional messages has a history which will interest the reader. For five years, during the school session, the writer has conducted in the Missionary Institute, at Nyack, N. Y., a weekly consecration service for the promotion of the spiritual life of the students. This service is known as the "Quiet Hour," and the messages are familiarly called "Quiet Hour Talks." The Quiet Hour is always a delightful and hallowed season, combining mental relaxation with spiritual invigoration.

From time to time the publication of a volume of these devotional messages has been requested by the students and by others who have heard them. After much prayer this request is now acceded to in the hope that the spiritual blessing that has so signally attended their delivery will thus reach a larger circle.

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THE BUDDING ROD

THE seventeenth chapter of Numbers contains the story of the rod of Aaron that budded. This incident vindicated the divine choice of the Aaronic priesthood and silenced rival claimants for priestly honors among the children of Israel.

Of course, the budding rod is, primarily, a type of the priestly ministry of Christ. Our Lord's priesthood is of divine choice. It is a living priesthood. The blossoming rod symbolizes the freshness, fragrance and fruitfulness of Christ's ministry of intercession.

But while the budding rod of Aaron is pre-eminently a type of the priesthood of Christ, it may also be taken as a type of the intercession of believers. For we have been made "priests unto God"; and it is our high calling and exalted privilege to fulfil in the name of Christ the office of intercession in behalf of others.

Let us notice three lessons which this beau-

tiful story teaches concerning the ministry of prayer. These are drawn from the *nature* of the rod, the *place* where Moses put it, and the *degrees* of its fruitfulness.

First, The nature of Aaron's rod.

The rod of Aaron was just like the other rods that were chosen. By nature it was simply a dry stick. Josephus states that the twelve rods were cut from a sort of desert brush. The rod was a symbol of authority. It may be they were not cut at the time, but had been for generations in the possession of the tribes of Israel. They seem to have been not unlike such a stick as one might cut for a cane from underbrush. They were not saplings with roots that could be transplanted. They were simply dry boughs, just such a bundle of sticks as one would gather for burning. This was the character of the rod that God caused to flourish.

What is the spiritual lesson? The meaning is that believers who are called to the ministry of prayer are by nature just like dry sticks. One is not born with ability to become an acceptable intercessor. One does not acquire the

requisite qualifications by education and culture. One may, indeed, be gifted in prayer; he may be fluent and even eloquent in public intercession. But the life of nature can furnish no part of the essential qualifications for the ministry of prayer. It must all be of grace. Thus all believers stand on the same plane; none in the matter of prayer has any advantage before God. The Lord chooses dry sticks from which all the sap is gone. Beloved, we must come before God as dry sticks. It may be humiliating to take this position; but if we are ever to be used to bless others through prayer we must be willing to be emptied of everything. All God desires is a yielded instrument that He can use. All He wants is an empty channel through which He can pour His grace upon the waste places of the earth.

Second, The place where Moses put the rod.

Moses took the bundle of rods and laid them up before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. He placed them in the Holy of Holies. They lay over night in the presence of Jehovah. The light of the Shekinah shone upon them. While there the rod of Aaron was warmed into

supernatural life. Instead of the sap of nature the life of grace began to flow through the withered stick, when lo! it became fruitful far above the fruitfulness of nature.

What does this mean in the prayer life? It means that the believer who would learn the divine art of intercession must enter the secret chamber of the Lord. He must come and place himself like a withered stick before the presence of God. As he kneels there his cold dead heart will be warmed into supernatural life. At first the springs of prayer may be dried up. He may be conscious of a dearth of spiritual desire. He may be unable to form a prayer in his heart or utter a prayer with his lips. But he has come before the throne of God as an intercessor; he is there by divine choice and appointment. As he patiently waits upon the Lord in silence he soon becomes strangely sensible of a new life enkindling his whole being. Spiritual desires begin to well up in his heart. His mind becomes centered upon some subject which perhaps he has not thought of before. He finds himself getting hold of God with a strangely new sense of access.

Longings and yearnings take possession of his heart, while words flow spontaneously from his lips. What does it all mean? Why, beloved, this is "praying in the Holy Ghost." This is the exercise of the ministry of intercession. The empty vessel is being filled with divine grace. The yielded instrument is being divinely used. The old stick is budding with new life.

Third, The degrees of the rod's fruitfulness.

Over night the rod of Aaron "brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds." The life of nature cannot mature its products as rapidly as the life of grace. Within a few hours the entire process of vegetation was completed; bud, blossom and almonds appeared on the same bough.

What meaning has all this for us? Surely, it may stand for three phases of the ministry of intercession. The almonds may represent answers to prayer. In the life of intercession the Lord continually fulfils his promises, and answers to prayer will be frequent and abundant. The blossoms may represent the things we are praying through with God. The almond has not appeared, but we have the blos-

som. The answer has not come, but we have the assurance. The ministry of intercession should be filled with blossoms. Long years of waiting precede the answer to many prayers. For the conversion of one man George Mueller prayed over sixty years. The man was saved at his funeral. The delays of God develop the seeds of prayer and promote the growth of its blossoms. These seeds of prayer may be represented by the buds on the rod. They are the new subjects, the fresh themes that the Lord is constantly putting into our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit. The prayer life should be planted with seeds. We must have the almonds; for without answers to prayer we should grow faint and discouraged. We need the blossoms; for the exercise of prayer strengthens our life in God. And may the Lord grant us the buds as well; for new subjects of prayer will broaden us and keep us in sympathetic touch with the interests of Christ's kingdom. Let us not have the almonds at one time, the blossoms at another, and the buds at still another; but let them all grow in our hearts together.

Moreover, the budding rod not only speaks of fruitfulness, but also of freshness and fragrance. What is so new and sweet as a bud in spring? What is so fresh and fragrant as a blossom? What is so wholesome and nourishing as fruit? As we thus minister as priests, may our spirits be fresh with the dew of Christ's youth; may our presence be fragrant with the incense of the altar; and may our lives be fruitful through the power of prevailing prayer.

THE PILGRIM'S PROMISE

"And behold I am with thee and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. xxviii. 15).

THIS verse is the pilgrim's promise. It was given to Jacob when he left his father's home in Canaan to seek his fortune in the land of Padan-Aram. During his long wanderings it insured him "journeying mercies."

This is a good verse for the traveler and the tourist to guard them against accident by land or by water. It is a good verse for the missionary who faces peril and privation in heathen lands. It is a good birthday verse as one starts out toward a new mile stone in life. It is a good New Year's verse as one crosses the threshold of another cycle of time. Finally, it is a good life motto, for it covers all the days and years until our heavenly Father shall minister unto

us an "abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom."

This promise is fourfold: it includes the divine presence, divine preservation, divine prediction and divine performance.

First, The divine presence. "Behold, I am with thee whithersoever thou goest." God's presence is portable. The first manifestation of Jehovah to Israel was in the pillar of cloud and of fire. This supernatural symbol met the chosen people at the passage of the Red Sea and remained with them until the crossing of the Jordan. For forty years it led them through the desert wastes. When Israel was on the march, the pillar went before them; when the people rested in their tents it abode upon the tabernacle. Whether in motion or at rest the children of Israel were covered by the Shekinah glory, the symbol of God's presence and power. This is the divine type of God's spiritual presence with His people today.

This promise is not alone for the cell and the cloister, but for the office and the busy marts of trade. We expect to find God in the closet and in the hour of meditation; but we shall find

Him also in our work and as our feet hasten to do His bidding. We have, however, no promise that the presence of God will be with us, if we go or tarry at our own pleasure; but wherever we journey at His bidding and whenever we abide at His command we shall find the presence of the Lord with us. As if to make the promise stronger it is stated in both the negative and the positive form, "I am with thee"—"I will not leave thee." This certainty of God's abiding presence with His children amid all vicissitudes and in every changing scene, the Portuguese hymn expresses thus: "I'll never, no never, no never forsake." Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."

Second, The divine preservation.

"I will keep thee whithersoever thou goest." God's providence accompanies His presence. The two are inseparable. Through the long weary years when Jacob toiled patiently for Leah and Rachel; through all his misunderstanding and disagreement with Laban; from the threatened attack of Esau,—during all the experiences of the twenty years or more that

Jacob was absent from Canaan, God kept him from all evil. He went away empty handed and alone. He came back wealthy and with a large family. God prospered him in basket and in store and made him the patriarchal head of the family of the covenant.

For those who are in His will the providence of God waits to do the same today. But the divine keeping power cannot be claimed by those who essay presumptuous deeds or attempt hazardous undertakings. If Jesus had thrown Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, He would have put Himself outside the protection of the angels of Jehovah.

God's keeping power does not mean freedom from trials and affliction. We shall be assailed by temptation, saddened by sorrow and threatened with disaster; but our God is a "God of deliverances." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Before the threatened shipwreck on the Adriatic God promised Paul the life of every one in the ship. How was the promise fulfilled? Some swam ashore and others reached the land on spars and planks; but — "and so it

came to pass that they all escaped safe to the land." Thus God will often keep us. We may get bruised and battered by the way, but we shall reach the goal, safe and sound by His grace.

Third, The divine prediction.

God had spoken many things to Jacob. His birth had been ushered in by prophecy. God had predicted that he would be the chosen seed. Through him the covenant blessings of Abraham were to descend and bless all the nations of the earth. Moreover, God met Jacob at the threshold of his career; and even in this chapter we find recorded words of promise to him. Prediction easily passes into communion. We can be sure that the presence that accompanied Jacob communed with Him by the way, whispering to his heart many glorious promises concerning the future. So the Lord will not only be with us and keep us, but will talk with us. To the believer who walks with God precious messages of comfort and inspiration are whispered by the Holy Spirit. The gloom of the pilgrim's pathway is not only lighted up by the Master's presence but its sol-

itude is broken by the sweet and cheering accents of His voice. Oftentimes as we plod along faithfully in the will of God He opens up our future before us until it becomes radiant with hope, fragrant in blessing, and fruitful in service. As Jacob toiled for many weary years, an obscure husbandman in a heathen land, his heart must have been cheered by the vision of the coming days. God may have let him see his son the prime minister of Egypt; and he must have caught a glimpse by faith of that Coming One of whom his own life of discipline and suffering was a type. So today God drops into our hearts seeds of promise. To many a humble workman at his bench and to many an obscure maiden in the home He is giving a vision of the whitened harvest fields of the world, and burning into their hearts the conviction that He wants them there.

Fourth, The divine performance.

God's promise to Jacob was, "I will not leave thee until I have done all that I have spoken to thee of." God not only promises, He also performs. How gloriously He fulfilled His word to Jacob. He returned to Canaan in safe-

ty; he became the head of his father's house; he lived to see Joseph prime minister of Egypt; and in his closing days he predicted the coming of Shiloh. His sun went down in peace. So God will fulfil His promises to us. "Hath He spoken and shall He not do it, or hath He promised and shall He not make it good?" The Lord honored the faith of Abraham by giving him Isaac. Let us also believe that whatever he has promised us He is able also to perform. Beloved, if God has dropped seeds of promise in your heart He is going to mature them. If He has given you the vision He will make it real. If temptations come they will only strengthen His word. If tears of affliction fall they will only water it. If God has taken hold of you for any thing He is going *to see you through*. Circumstances cannot change God's plan for your life. Your own honest failures cannot defeat it. Satan himself cannot frustrate it. You will yet be able to say with Joshua, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that God hath spoken concerning me." In the hour of trial, in the time of discouragement, when disaster threatens and doubts assail, let this

glorious promise cheer you, like a beacon fire in the darkest night: "I will not leave thee until I have done all that I have spoken to thee of."

FRESHNESS, FRAGRANCE AND FRUITFULNESS

"I will be as the dew unto Israel. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. From Me is thy fruit found" (Hos. xiv. 5, 7, 8).

THE literary structure of the last chapter of Hosea is remarkable. There are three speakers,—the prophet, Jehovah and Israel. In verses 1 and 2 the prophet addresses Israel. In verses 3 to 7 Jehovah speaks to His people. In verse 8 there is a dialogue between Jehovah and Ephraim, representing Israel. In the closing verse the prophet speaks, applying the truths of the chapter to believers of all ages.

The chapter is rich in Oriental symbolism and abounds in tropical luxuriance. Amid all the wealth of spiritual truth there are three suggestive thoughts that have a practical bearing upon our deeper life in the Holy Spirit. "I will be as the dew unto Israel"—this speaks of freshness. "The scent thereof shall be as the

wine of Lebanon"—this speaks of fragrance. "From Me is thy fruit found"—this speaks of fruitfulness.

First, Spiritual freshness.

The dew is a source of freshness. It is nature's provision for renewing the face of the earth. It falls at night; and in the early morning the flowers of the meadow and the grass of the field, which have been made dull and dry by the dust and glare of the sun, are fresh and moist. In the eastern lands where the rainfall is slight and where there are prolonged seasons of drought the dew has a value which can scarcely be appreciated in western countries. There it is an absolute necessity. Without it the vegetation would die.

It is this great value of the dew which is so often recognized in the Scriptures. It is used as the symbol of spiritual refreshing. Just as nature is bathed by the dew, so the Lord renews the strength of His people. In Psalm cx. 3 dew is employed to represent the freshness and strength of Christ: "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." This renewing life He possesses not for Himself but for His people. In

Titus iii. 5 the same thought of spiritual freshness is connected with the ministry of the Holy Ghost—"the renewing of the Holy Ghost." This is the spiritual significance of the custom of feet washing, which gave refreshment after tramping through the dust and heat of the day (John xiii. 10).

Many Christian workers do not recognize the importance of the heavenly dew in their lives. As a result they lack freshness and vigor. Their teaching is Scriptural, their labors are faithful and abundant; but somehow their public utterances are lifeless. Oftentimes their messages sound old and stale. The secret of the trouble is to be found not in their preaching nor in their service, but in themselves. Their own hearts are half famished, yet they recognize it not. Their spirits are drooping for lack of dew.

Beloved fellow worker, you recognize the folly of a laboring man attempting to do his day's work without eating. Do you not recognize the folly of a servant of God attempting to minister without eating of the heavenly manna? Nor will it suffice for you to have spirit-

ual nourishment occasionally. Every day you must receive the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Do not attempt to serve in any capacity without it. Do not preach a sermon or lead a meeting or write an article or conduct an inquirers' service or pray with the sick or afflicted, without having your hearts laden with the dew of heaven. You know when you have not the dew, and you know when you have it. You know when your own spirit is exultant with joy and when it droops in heaviness. You know when your heart is rested and satisfied in Christ and when it is restless and hungry. You know when your whole being is pulsating with the vigor and freshness of divine life and when you feel jaded and worn.

Quietness and absorption bring the dew. At night when leaf and blade are still, the vegetable pores are open to receive the refreshing and invigorating bath. So spiritual dew comes from lingering in the Master's presence. Get in touch with God. Get quiet and still before Him. Haste will prevent your receiving the dew. The dew collects only on a quiet and cool surface. Wait before God until you feel

saturated with His presence. Then go forth to your next duty with the conscious freshness and vigor of Christ.

Second, Spiritual fragrance.

Freshness produces fragrance in both the natural and the spiritual world. Go into a summer flower garden and you will find the air laden with sweet perfumes. In the early morning, when the dew is still on bud and blossom, the fragrance is sweetest. The dew brings both freshness and fragrance. In our spiritual life and in our Christian ministry fragrance is as essential as freshness. Where the one is absent, there is a lack of the other. In eastern lands garments are often perfumed, so that the presence of the wearer may be fragrant. The Song of Songs abounds in symbolical allusions to the fragrance of the garments of Christ. As the priests ministered in tabernacle and temple the fragrance from the altar of incense filled the Holy Place. So Paul tells us that we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ. Fragrance is very subtle, but its absence or presence is easily detected. I always recognize a letter from California before I open it or see

the stamp because of the fragrance of the envelope. Perfume has power to awaken memory. A stray scent on a passing breeze has called up scenes of earlier years.

Now, there is about a strong personality something that corresponds to fragrance. Sometimes it is called an atmosphere. There is a subtle charm of personality about some people which is felt when entering their presence. This is often caught and diffused by those who associate with them. Christ possessed this fragrant personality in a preëminent degree. The early disciples caught and diffused this spiritual charm. Thus the officers of the Sanhedrin took knowledge of John and Peter that "they had been with Jesus and learned of Him." Spiritual fragrance is suggestive of Christ. If we live with the Master and walk with Him, those who associate with us will see something Christlike in our character and conduct. But the charm of a fragrant influence lies in the unconsciousness of him who exerts it. It is not necessary for us to know that our lives are fragrant. Indeed, to know it is apt at once to destroy the charm.

Moses "wist not that his face shone." But we can be sure of possessing fragrance without knowing it or thinking about it. The fragrance is not ours but Christ's. If we see to it that we linger much in His presence, He Himself will manifest His own sweet and fragrant life through us.

Third, Spiritual fruitfulness.

The dew that brings freshness and fragrance also produces fruitfulness in nature and in grace. The bright colors and sweet perfumes of vegetation are only means to a higher end. It is thus also in the spiritual world. Freshness of spirit and fragrance of presence are not ends in themselves; they only contribute to the higher ministry of doing good.

In nature fruit is the full maturity of the seed. It is the result of growth and development. It springs spontaneously and inevitably from its source. The dew may stand for all that vegetation needs for its full fruition, for light and warmth as well as for moisture and nourishment. So spiritual dew may represent all that the soul needs for its highest development and largest ministry. Jehovah who gives

the dew and produces the fragrance also causes the fruitfulness. "From Me is thy fruit found."

All Christian service is not fruit. Much of it springs from ourselves. Christians are called to service. A young convert is usually told that he should begin at once to work for the Lord. With an eager desire to do something for the Master and under a compelling sense of duty he begins to be active in Christian service. While the motive is right the efforts are often misdirected. How many there are who have a "zeal not unto knowledge." Many people are wearing themselves out working for the up-building of their local churches who think that they are thus doing effective service for Christ. For example, Christian women will bake cakes and make fancy articles for fairs and festivals and Christian men will buy tickets to attend them, with the thought that they are serving Christ. This may be work, but it is not fruit. It is wood, hay and stubble; and in the day that reveals all things it will be burnt up by fire.

Fruit is the result of union with Christ. It

is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is service given to us by the Lord. Many Christians make the mistake of thinking that they always must be doing a great deal for Christ. But it is not the *quantity*, but the *quality* of our service that counts. Ten things undertaken for Christ at our own prompting will count for less than one thing done in His name at His bidding. Again, fruit is not only service; it may be suffering. In fact, fruit is anything which the life of Christ within us produces. It includes graces of character, as well as deeds of ministry. To do nothing when Christ bids us be still is fruit acceptable unto Him. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

WAITING FOR GOD

“Blessed are all they that wait for Him” (Isa. xxx. 18).

WE hear a great deal about waiting on God. There is, however, another side.

When we wait *on* God, He is waiting till we are ready; when we wait *for* God, we are waiting till He is ready. There are some people who say and many more who believe that as soon as we meet all the conditions, God will answer our prayers. They say that God lives in an eternal *now*; with Him there is no past nor future; and that if we could fulfil all that He requires in the way of obedience to His will, *immediately* our needs would be supplied, our desires fulfilled, our prayers answered. There is much truth in this belief; and yet it only expresses one side of the truth. While God *lives* in an eternal *now*, yet He *works* out His purposes in *time*. There are crises in the plan of redemption and in the transformation of human lives, when God preëminently works. Thus,

after our first parents sinned it was at least four thousand years before Christ came to die on the cross. The Lamb had been slain from the foundations of the world in the purpose of God; but there had to come a "fulness of time" (Gal. iv. 4) before the work of redemption could be accomplished. Pentecost occurred at a fixed time in the sovereign counsel of God. Jesus ascended nearly two thousand years ago, but the time of His return is still delayed. But the second advent we believe will be just on time according to the chronology of heaven.

In the spiritual transformation of human lives there is a sovereign element in God's dealings. There is a time when He can work; and this time is often quite independent of our spiritual condition. Among others I want to mention three reasons why God waits that He may be gracious unto us.

First, The development of patience.

The Greek word rendered "patience" in the New Testament literally means "to stay" or "remain under." It often signifies endurance. In a general way the word may be said to mean

the ability to wait. Patience is just waiting ; and waiting often without knowing any reason for the delay. We know that in the natural world there is the law of growth and the process of development. There is seed time and harvest. One does not expect to gather fall apples in the spring ; nor to pluck June roses in December. In the spiritual world there is also a law of growth and a process of development. A petition presented before God is like a seed dropped in the ground. Forces above and beyond our control must work upon it, till the true fruition of the answer is given. Oftentimes when the desire of our heart is unfulfilled and our prayers remain unanswered we are tempted to feel that the reason must lie in our own hearts. Frequently it does, but not always. Have you never been in a situation where it would be a relief to you to find something wrong in your life? The assurance of being right with God that comes when waiting before Him, you are almost tempted to distrust. You have practically decided that something must be wrong, else the answer to your prayer would come ; and hence you feel bound to find something. But

every season of self-examination and agonizing before God results in the quiet conviction that you are simply to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. What is the matter? Why, beloved, God is simply teaching you patience, for it is *after ye have done the will of God* that ye are to receive the promise. God is ripening and mellowing you. God wants you to be "perfect," that is, mature. He wants you to be "entire," that is, no part lacking. Just as the October sun flavors the apple, so it is the grace of patience that makes us a "savor of life" unto others.

Second, The trial of faith.

Another reason why God frequently delays the answer to our prayers is the trial of our faith. The word "temptations" in James i. 2 does not mean enticements to evil, but rather times of testing. Of the true meaning of the word, God's command to Abraham to offer up Isaac is an illustration. Satan tempts men; but God tests them. According to I. Peter i. 7 it is not our faith but the testing of our faith that is precious in God's sight. And let us remember that it is not our faith that God tests but the

faith of Christ in us. The first thing the trial of faith accomplishes is the breaking down of what little faith we have of our own. Our faith will not stand the strain. The test of faith must continue till only Christ's faith in us remains. I was told recently of the method out West by which gold is purified. It is put into a furnace. The fire waxes hotter and hotter, and is allowed to continue till the sparks stop flying, when the gold is purified. The flying sparks are the dross which is being burnt up. So God lets the testing fires of our faith wax hotter and hotter and continue till the sparks stop flying; the sparks of impatience, murmurings and questions of all kinds. It is encouraging to remember that the faith of Christ is a tested and proved faith. In the wilderness He met the enemy and conquered him. There is no possibility, consequently, that the faith of Christ in us will break down; God knows just how far we can go and just how much we can endure; and when He can see reflected in us the image of His Son He will put out the fires and we shall come forth as gold purified.

Third, The last reason I will mention for

God's frequent delays in answering our prayers is that through our waiting time He may get glory by the blessing that comes to other lives. In this connection it is true that no one liveth unto himself. There is a vital unity among the members of the body of Christ. It is a principle upon which God works, that in blessing one life many other lives are thereby enriched. If received in the right spirit, the waiting time before our blessing comes as well as the full answer to our prayers may become a fruitful source of help to others. Our patient endurance, our steadfast faith, our quiet and hopeful confidence will inspire others to a similar trust in God.

"For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37).

"Though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. ii. 3).

LIGHT FROM THE WORD

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 105).

NO truth is more clearly revealed in the Scriptures than the truth of divine guidance. That the Lord has promised to guide His people not only in the crises of life but in the details of each day, no one will dispute. From the appearance of the pillar of cloud and fire at the Red Sea to the vision of the Lamb of God leading His people by the side of the river of life, the Bible abounds in promises and illustrations of guidance. Without multiplying Scripture references, we may adduce a few examples and passages that readily come to the mind. Abraham "went out not knowing whither he went;" but Jehovah led him through all the years of his pilgrimage. He made known unto Jacob His will that he should go into Egypt to see Joseph. He guided the children of Israel for forty years in that "great and terrible wilderness." He led Elijah to the

brook Cherith, where He fed him by ravens, and then to Zarephath, where He sustained him by a widow. Through David God has promised, "I will guide thee with My counsel and afterwards receive thee to glory. I will guide thee with Mine eye." Through Isaiah we learn, "The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His ways." Jesus declared, "My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me." Paul wrote, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God."

But while divine guidance is a precious truth of revelation, no subject has been more abused. It has led to the wildest errors in belief and the grossest excesses in conduct. But truth is the best antidote to error; and the Scriptural exposition of a doctrine is the best corrective of the fanaticism or the immoral conduct to which its abuse may have led. Consequently, just because divine guidance has been misunderstood and misrepresented it needs to be set forth in its true Scriptural light, safeguarded from error and balanced by other doctrines of revelation.

The fact of divine guidance is one thing ; the method is quite another. Hannah Whitall Smith, in a tract on the subject, indicates four methods of divine guidance, viz., the Word of God, the Spirit of God, the providence of God, and the sanctified judgment of the believer. We wish to consider for a little divine guidance through the Word of God. It is not designed that this study shall be exhaustive of the subject ; it is intended rather to offer a few suggestions, correcting some errors that are popularly held, and indicating a few safe principles.

First, The wrong way to get light from the Word.

There is a practice quite common among Christians known as "cutting the Scriptures." This consists in opening the Bible at random, allowing the eye to rest where it will on the page, and then taking the verse or passage thus discovered, as the mind of the Spirit, to be disobeyed with the certainty of condemnation if not of disaster. This is a pernicious habit, without Scriptural warrant and productive of much evil. It partakes of the character of the lot,

having about it a large element of chance. It is true that oftentimes in this way the eye lights upon a verse that gives comfort or strength in time of sorrow or weakness. It may indeed happen that perchance the guidance needed may thus be obtained. But such instances are usually the result of accident; and the fact that they sometimes occur is apt to lend encouragement to the practice.

However, the small amount of good that may result from this habit is outweighed by the large amount of evil that is sure to follow. Many instances might be given of distressing, if not disastrous results, that have come from this practice. At the time of the civil war a young man decided the question of his enlistment in this way. He opened to the passage in the ninety-first Psalm, "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." He told his friends that he would go through the war unharmed. In this belief he enlisted. In the battle of the Wilderness he fell dead, shot through the heart. His family and friends were perplexed and half inclined to question

the goodness and grace of God. There is a humorous illustration of the evil consequences with which this practice of cutting the Scriptures is fraught. A man in great despondency of heart and mind thus opened the Bible for light. The first time he turned to the passage in Esther where Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had built for Mordecai. Not satisfied with this Scriptural direction, he again cut the Word. This time he opened to the statement that Judas went out and hanged himself. Still unwilling to obey the Scriptures, he resorted a third time to this means for light. This time he received the reassuring message, "Go thou and do likewise." Needless to say, he refused to obey. In disappointment and disgust he abandoned this method of seeking light from the Scriptures.

This way of handling the Bible is undignified and irreverent. It regards the Scriptures too much as a fetish or a talisman. In ancient Israel the will of the Lord may have been read in the changing colors of the Urim and the Thummim. But today God does not reveal His

mind by using the Word in such a superstitious manner. Cutting the Scriptures is of the essence of bibliolatry.

Second, The right way to get light from the Word.

The Bible is the revelation of God's will to man. There are occasional hints in the Scriptures of a hidden counsel or a secret will of God; but with these inscrutable operations of the divine mind we have nothing to do. "The secret things belong unto God; but those that are revealed belong unto us and unto our children forever." The Bible has been likened to many indispensable objects in life. It is a chart, a compass, a guidebook to show us our duty here on earth and to pilot us at last into the haven of heaven.

It is only with the revelation of God's will in the Scriptures that man has to do. Paul enjoins us not to be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. How, then, shall we learn the mind of the Lord as revealed in His Word? Not by such a capricious and uncertain method as has just been described. This is handling the Word of God deceitfully. But

the contents of Holy Scripture yield themselves to diligent and consistent study. This is handling the Word of God aright. Somewhere within the covers of the sacred Book God has revealed His will either by the enunciation of general principles or by the enactment of specific laws, concerning every matter of character and conduct. For example, His will in regard to our belief, conversation, behaviour, dress, health, business, recreation, etc., is clearly revealed in the Bible. But how shall we find our duty on a given subject? By searching the Scriptures reverently and diligently with the best aid at our command. Christ said: "Search the Scriptures." In a spirit of submission and with a sincere prayer for help, with the aid of concordance and commentary, and above all with the help of the Spirit, we must study the Word. Much blessing will be received by him who merely reads the Scriptures. But the riches of the Word, like the hidden treasures of the earth, are not found on the surface; as the diver finds the pearl at the bottom of the sea, and the miner finds the diamond in the depths of the

earth, so he who would find the deep things of God must search for them in the heart of the Word.

Fanaticism usually grows out of the over emphasis of a truth. Thus the fanatical practice of cutting the Scriptures is the abuse of a legitimate and very helpful method of seeking light from them. After a sincere prayer for light and in simple dependence upon the Holy Spirit it is often profitable to open the Bible at pleasure and from the point where the eye rests to read on until the Spirit flashes some text across the mind, accompanied by the conviction that it contains the desired light. Sometimes but few verses will be read in this way; at other times several chapters.

Another way in which the Spirit guides us through the Word is by bringing to our remembrance in times of darkness or trial passages of Scripture that have been stored up in the mind. Often in prayer or in meditation the Spirit will thus take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. He is our divine Remembrancer who has promised to guide us into all truth.

THE COMMITTED LIFE

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II. Tim. i. 12).

THIS verse speaks of a committal of our lives to God, a committal that is at once definite, complete, and final. For years the writer was much perplexed about the subject of consecration. He knew Christians who every time they prayed in public and in fact every morning (according to their own statements) reconsecrated their lives afresh to God. He did this himself repeatedly, yet with the conviction that one consecration, if intelligently made and involving the whole life, should be sufficient. Providentially, a devotional book fell into his hands; and in a chapter on consecration he found the light he needed. The author states the matter substantially as follows: Suppose I call on a friend and make him a present of a book. He will, of course, accept my gift with gratitude, and put the

book on a shelf in his library. Some time, later, while calling on my friend, I see the book, perhaps lying on the table. Suppose now I pick up the volume and say, "My friend, I esteem you very highly, and would like to give you this little book." Naturally, my friend would be surprised at the repetition of the presentation, but would probably thank me again, and express his pleasure at receiving the book. But now suppose that I called on my friend six or a dozen times within a year, and each time picked up the book and gave it to him over again. Is it not likely that he would begin to doubt whether I really meant to give him the book? And would he not perhaps be justified in refusing to keep the book under such circumstances? Then the author shows that this is the way Christians treat the Lord. They give themselves again and again in consecration, until it would not be surprising if He should really question the sincerity of an act so often repeated.

But some one will say, "Every day I know more and have more to give to the Lord. Can I not consecrate these new things?" Yes;

but in giving the new things one is apt to give over again the old things. After all there is a better way; and our writer meets this very point. She supposes the case of one person giving another a plot of ground worth a certain amount. In the course of a few years the value of the land is doubled and perhaps trebled. She then asks the question whether the increment of value does not belong to the owner without making necessary any new gift. Of course, the question answers itself; and so after one has consecrated himself to the Lord the growth in grace and in knowledge which the days and the years bring form a part of the original consecration. New powers and new possessions when recognized as such have only to be counted as belonging to the Lord along with the original gift of our lives. Oh, beloved, cease this continual reconsecration of yourselves to God, and by one definite and complete transaction forever commit yourselves to Him in such a way that it need never be repeated.

This little verse tells of four steps leading to this result. Let us notice them briefly and as

we come to each step let us take it boldly and thus find ourselves forever settled and established in God.

First, Believing in God.

Paul says, "I know Him whom I have believed." Here you will notice that belief in God comes before the knowledge of God. This is the divine order; faith first, then knowledge. The particular form of believing which this verse presents is that it is your privilege thus once for all to consecrate yourself, and that God will receive and own forever the gift that you thus lay upon the altar. You must see this as your Scriptural right. This is the first step. And for the Scriptural right you need look no further than this very verse. Paul made such a disposition of his life; and his example as well as his teaching it is our duty as well as our privilege to follow.

Second, Knowing God.

The knowledge of God comes after believing in Him. Of course there is an intellectual conception or knowledge about God which precedes any real belief in God; but it is not of intellectual knowledge that this verse speaks.

When Paul says, "I know whom I have believed," he means a personal, experimental, intuitional knowledge of God as Saviour and Friend. Such was the knowledge of God which Abraham possessed when "he went out not knowing whither he went." He did not know the way, but he did know God, and that was enough. Some one in Luther's presence began to quote this verse thus: "I know *in* whom I have believed." "No, no," cried the great reformer, "the word 'in' is not there. I will not allow even a preposition to come between my soul and God. It says, 'I know *whom* I have believed.' " If you are going to trust your property in the hands of a lawyer, you want to know him well so as to be sure of his integrity and honesty of character. If you are going to trust your body to the care of a physician, you want to know his sympathy and skill. So if you are going to commit your life and eternal interests to God forever, you want to know Him in a deeply personal way.

Third, Committing yourself to God.

The third step is a definite transaction. The word "commit" implies two parties, the syllable

co or *com* meaning "with" or "together." In this case the two parties are God and yourself. You give Him something and He takes it. You lay yourself and all your possessions and interests upon the altar, and He accepts your sacrifice and seals it forever. That is a committal, a definite transaction between the Lord and your own heart. Remember, too, that when a transaction involving two parties has taken place neither party can withdraw without the consent of the other. When one has definitely consecrated himself to the Lord, he really cannot do it over again, unless the Lord either gives back what has been consecrated to Him or consents to a renewal of the consecration. Neither of these things will the Lord do, and consequently this is what makes one consecration sufficient and eternal. On the one hand, the Lord will surely not give back what we have consecrated to Him, for He has promised to keep that which we have committed unto Him "against that day." On the other hand, the Lord will not consent to a renewal of consecration because that would mean that the first one was insufficient and unsatisfactory.

There is only one way, therefore, that a renewal of consecration can be justified and that is that one willfully takes himself out of the hands of God. Of course, if a believer stretches forth his hand and takes his gift from the altar, it must be replaced before God will accept it. Such a case is possible but not probable; in fact, no believer who walks with God is in any danger of thus deliberately removing himself from His keeping power. Paul assures us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Moreover, Jesus Himself said that no man is able to pluck us out of His hand. And as if to make stronger our assurance of the divine keeping power He added, "My Father is greater than I; and no one can pluck you out of His hand."

But while consecration should be once for all, its daily recognition will be a means of grace. Instead of giving yourselves anew to God every day, as you rise every morning say,

"Lord, I am Thine, entirely Thine,
Purchased and saved by blood divine."

If you like, look up into God's face and say a dozen times a day, "I am my Beloved's and my

Beloved is mine." God will meet your loving trust and will sweetly respond, "I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine."

Fourth, Trust in God.

When you have thus definitely committed yourself to God, you must follow up the transaction by the attitude and habit of trust. Amid all changes of feeling or circumstances you must believe that the Lord is true to His word and keeps that which you have committed unto Him. This was Paul's confidence for he said, "I am *persuaded* that He is able to keep my deposit." "Deposit" is the literal rendering of the phrase "that which I have committed." The figure is perhaps that of a bank into which the apostle had put his money. He had no fear that the president would default or that the cashier would run away with his money. When he left his deposit in the bank of heaven it was "against that day."

The story is told of a negro who at a camp meeting tried to give himself to God. Every night at the altar he consecrated himself, but every night before he left the meeting the devil would come to him and convince him that he

did not feel any different and therefore he wasn't consecrated. Again and again he was beaten back by the adversary. Finally, one evening he came to the meeting with an axe and a big stake. After consecrating himself he drove the stake in the ground just where he had knelt. As he was leaving the building the devil came to him as usual and tried to make him believe it was all a farce. At once he went back to the stake and pointing to it, said, "Look here, Mr. Devil, do you see that stake? Well, that's my witness that God has forever accepted me." Immediately the devil left him and he had no further doubts on the subject.

Beloved, if you are tempted to doubt the finality of your consecration, drive a stake down somewhere and let it be your witness before God and even the devil that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit forever.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

“And the sheep hear His voice” (John x. 3).

WHEN a believer says, “The Lord spoke to me,” what does he mean? What is the voice of the Lord like? To many earnest Christians who believe in divine guidance these questions are perplexing. The voice of the Lord is not an audible sound to the outer ear. As such it may have come to Abraham, Moses and Elijah; but in the present age the Lord speaks to His children by the Holy Spirit. But His voice is no less real because inaudible to the physical ear. There is a spiritual organism corresponding to our physical body with analogous powers and functions. Thus there is a spiritual eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ. In like manner, there is a spiritual sense of hearing; and upon this inner organ the holy accent of the voice of the Lord falls. Perhaps it is not so much a voice as a touch; a strange sweet sense of the contact of the Spirit of God with our spirit.

Just as one can detect the presence of another in the room when he does not see him, so the believer whose inner spirit is sensitive and responsive knows the Master's voice when He speaks.

But how is the believer to recognize the voice of the Lord when he hears it? Some years ago a gifted spiritual writer in treating the subject of divine guidance stated that the believer must distinguish between four voices, viz., the voice of the Lord, the voice of the enemy, the voice of his own evil heart and the voice of the new man within him. This introduces complexity into what is in reality a much simpler subject. The distinction is too fine always to decide between the voice of the Lord and the voice of the new man within us on the one hand, and the voice of the enemy and the voice of our own evil heart on the other. For the Holy Spirit so unites Himself with our new spirit that we can not always tell whether a given thought or impulse comes from Him or from our better natures. On the other hand, it is difficult always to distinguish between a suggestion that comes from the ene-

my and one that is prompted by our own evil hearts. Indeed, the devil so insinuates himself into our own thoughts and feelings that what comes from him seems usually to proceed from our own hearts. He always likes to get at us through ourselves; and if he can project an impure thought into our minds or inject an unholy desire into our hearts and then can succeed in making us believe that we ourselves are very wicked else we would not have such wicked thoughts and desires, he has simply practiced upon us one of his devices of which we should not be ignorant. For this reason it is better to drop yourself out of the count. Identify all the good that seems to come from yourself with the Holy Spirit; and identify all the evil that seems to come from yourself with the enemy. This will remove many difficulties and greatly simplify the matter. Then learn to distinguish between the voice of the Lord and the voice of the enemy.

How then can we tell the voice of the Lord from the voice of the enemy? In a word, the difference between the two has to be learned. It is a divine art to distinguish between them.

Just as the ear of the musician has to be trained to distinguish between musical notes, so the ear of the believer has to be exercised to discern the voice of the Lord. It is said that an orchestral leader not only can instantly detect a discord but can also recognize the instrument that makes it. So the disciplined and chastened ear of the believer soon learns to detect the voice of strangers. But there are no fixed rules by which the child of God can invariably decide this matter. One has to learn by mistakes. An Irishman who professed to know all the shoals and sunken rocks in a dangerous channel was hired as a pilot. All went along pretty well for a short time when suddenly the boat roughly bumped against a sunken rock. The captain said, "Mike, I thought you knew all the rocks and shoals in this channel." "Shure, and I do," said the pilot, "*and that's one of them.*" So like the Irish pilot we learn of the existence of many sunken rocks in our path by striking them. The writer has run against a few snags and would mark them with red lights for the guidance of others.

In the first place, the voice of the enemy is exciting and produces a spirit of restlessness and rush. On the other hand, the voice of the Lord is quieting and produces a spirit of rest and peace. This is a good test to distinguish between God's voice and Satan's voice. When the devil speaks he sets you in a big whirl. When the Lord speaks He produces tranquility of heart and mind. Even when the Lord's voice is corrective, it does not disturb the calm serenity of your communion. At the same time that the Lord tells you of your fault, He shows you the blood that will wash it away. When He whispers that you have grieved Him He accompanies the message by a sweet sense of His tenderness and love. To be chastened by the Lord is in itself a blessing. The accents of the Lord's voice, like those of a mother, are soothing and comforting. On the other hand, the devil fills you with condemnation without revealing the blood of cleansing. He tries to make you see the dark picture of your evil heart, but gives you no bright vision of Jesus. The devil stirs you up as a stick does a mud puddle. He harasses your mind and discour-

ages your heart. He fills you with distraction and desperation until you hardly know what to do. When you feel this way it is the devil talking to you. There is no doubt about it. On such occasions you need not hesitate for a moment. Turn a deaf ear to the harsh and exasperating tones of the cruel taskmaster, and listen to the soft and soothing accents of your beloved Lord.

In the second place, the enemy always wants you to be in a great hurry in deciding a matter, and tries to condemn you for any delay. On the other hand, the Lord always gives you time to think it over and then come to a decision. In the question of guidance the voice of the Lord leads, while the voice of the enemy drives; the enemy pushes while the Lord gently impels us. "He led them on safely so that they feared not." To some extent quickness or slowness of decision may be a matter of temperament; but as a general thing the enemy will try to make you act upon impulses rather than upon settled principles. He will try to make you rush right off and do a thing before you know which is the right course to pursue;

whereas the Lord will always give you plenty of time to know His will. Take a year rather than act prematurely. A man once called at the home of George Mueller and declared that he must see him at once about a matter affecting wide interests in the cause of Christ. Mr. Mueller was engaged at the time and sent word that he would see the man on the following day. But the stranger protested that he could not wait, that thousands of dollars might be lost before the morrow. In reply Mr. Mueller said that if the matter could not wait twenty-four hours he had better not touch it at all. If the matter was of God it would keep that long. The next day at the appointed time the man returned and declared that the whole thing was a snare of the enemy. He was very grateful to Mr. Mueller for his wise counsel.

Remember, beloved, that there is no condemnation where there is no light. As long as you can honestly say that you are not sure of the Lord's mind in a matter, it is better to defer any action. Remember Josh Billings' advice, "When you don't know what to do, don't do

it." But be careful not to wait after you know the right path. Condemnation begins the moment there is sufficient light to act. Hesitation after one knows God's will is disobedience.

In his earlier experiments with wireless telegraphy Marconi discovered that a message intended for a certain point might be intercepted and thus reach a wrong destination. He found that there was nothing to prevent several receivers at different points from taking a message from a given transmitter. In times of war this would lead to embarrassment, as an enemy might receive private dispatches and thus get possession of state secrets. To overcome this difficulty Marconi tuned to each other a transmitter and a receiver. In this way no other receiver could take a given message. This invention can be easily understood by a simple experiment. If one stands near a piano and strikes a note with his voice, he will hear a sympathetic response from a certain string in the instrument. If the pitch of the voice be altered a different note will be heard. No other string will respond except the one in tune with the voice. So, beloved, if you would learn the

secret of the Lord's voice get in tune with it. Get so adjusted to Him that your heart will not respond to anything that comes from the evil one. If we do hear the voice of the enemy it will produce a jar and a discord that will serve as a warning to us. Stephen Merritt says that when the devil tries to imitate the Lord's voice there is always a cackle about it which the discerning believer can detect. The tuning will not all come at once; it will take time. The Lord may have to thumb and screw our lives as a musician does a stringed instrument. When He first speaks, we may not recognize His voice; but if we patiently listen with a spirit ready instantly to obey He will teach us the accent of His voice and thus we shall learn to "walk by the Spirit."

NEWNESS OF LIFE

“Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. vi. 3, 4).

THE sixth, seventh and eighth chapters of Romans constitute a distinct section in the unfolding of the argument of the epistle, and may be described as an exposition of the new life in Christ. The thought of the apostle in the opening verses of the sixth chapter is—our freedom from the dominion of sin through our judicial union with Christ in His death and resurrection. In the purpose of God we died and rose again with Christ. Through the ordinance of Christian baptism, and by the exercise, on our part, of a lively faith in the operation of God (Col. ii. 12) our oneness with Christ in His death and resurrection is made real. The glorious result in actual experience is a moral state, in which it is the

purpose of God that "we should walk in newness of life."

In the New Testament there are two Greek adjectives translated "new": one is *neos*, expressing what is new in time, i. e., recent or young; the other is *kainos*, expressing what is new in substance and quality, i. e., the noun described by its adjective is itself new. The word "newness" in the phrase "newness of life" is a noun formed from the latter adjective, and expresses "a new condition of moral life." The only other occurrence of this word in the New Testament is in chapter vii. 6 of this epistle, where the meaning is the same, viz., "the new state of life in which the Holy Spirit places us." The meaning of both the Greek adjectives, however, seems to be conveyed by this noun, i. e., newness in substance and in form.

It is within the power of language not only to express thought, but also to present pictures to the mind. One word will often suggest a whole scene. Around many words, such as "mother," "home," "fatherland," precious memories and tender associations cluster. The phrase "newness of life" is of this character. Like the

fragrance of the empty rose-jar, like a balmy breath of spring in midwinter, like a stray gleam of sunshine on a cloudy day, this expression, "newness of life," suggests all the characteristics and blessed privileges of the life "hid with Christ in God." Let us notice some of them:

First, The source of the life is itself new.

It is Christ (Col. iii. 4). We are accounted by God as dead to our old life, and as alive to Christ forevermore. This is the new attitude which we are commanded to take by simple faith (Rom. vi. 11). As we steadfastly reckon this to be true, God makes it real in us. We are inseparably united to Christ as the new source of our life (Eph. v. 30).

Second, The life itself is new.

It is eternal life. Eternal life is not primarily a matter of duration, but of quality. It is a new kind of life (John xvii. 3). At regeneration we are introduced into a new world. We are said to be new creatures in Christ Jesus (II. Cor. v. 17). The Bible becomes a new book. The world itself seems changed. "Old

things are passed away : behold, all things are become new."

Third, Newness of life is fresh and unworn.

It is life for the day. Like physical life, the new life in Christ, though continuous, must be sustained by nourishment. Christ is not only the Source of our life, but we must feed upon Him by faith in our hearts, moment by moment (John vi. 53-57). He is the very atmosphere which we breathe (Acts xvii. 28).

Fourth, Newness of life is spontaneous and overflowing.

It is springing life (John iv. 14). The Psalmist sang, "All my springs are in Thee" (Ps. lxxxvii. 7). God wants us to have the springing life of childhood and the enthusiasm of youth. He promises that our "youth shall be renewed" (Hebrew, "restored"), "like the eagle's" (Isaiah xl. 31). Of Christ it was written, "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth" (Ps. cx. 3). If we have Christ, we shall have a young heart, ready for service or sacrifice at His bidding.

Fifth, Newness of life is fruitful.

It not only displays itself in happy feelings, but expends its energy in work for Christ. It is preëminently a life of service (John xv. 16). Our fulness of blessing is for others and cannot be restrained. Often in reaching the needs of others it will cut new channels for itself.

Sixth, Newness of life is completeness of life. We are complete in Him (Col. ii. 10). Consciousness witnesses to the oneness of our personal life. We cannot tell where the spirit ends, and the soul begins, or where the soul ends and the body begins. We cannot partly die with Christ, and partly remain alive to sin. As a person, a tripartite unity (I. Thess. v. 23), we yield ourselves as dead and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ lives out His own life in us. We are partakers of His Spirit (I. Cor. vi. 17). He shares His mind with us (I. Cor. ii. 16). He unites our bodies to His resurrection body and quickens them by the Holy Spirit (Eph. v. 30; Rom. viii. 11).

Seventh, Newness of life is a life of glory.

The apostle tells us that "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," and that likewise we are to "walk in newness

of life." In other words we are to walk in newness of life "by the glory of the Father." The motive power of the new life is not our will or anything we can do, but "the glory of the Father." God Himself who raises us from the dead in Christ, enables us evermore to walk "in newness of life." The life of glory is resurrection life of which even here we may have the earnest in the "life hid with Christ in God."

THE VISION OF THE UNSEEN

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible”
(Heb. xi. 27).

THERE is a secret that explains every life. Whenever a prominent man dies his career is always written up. An effort is made to find out the secret of his successful life. It seems to be taken for granted that a person does not achieve distinction by accident. In Hebrews xi. we have recorded the secret of the lives of many of the Old Testament saints. Abel was justified by faith in the coming Redeemer. Enoch walked with God in holiness of character and life. In the midst of a “crooked and perverse generation,” Noah lived a life of separation from evil and devotion unto God. The secret of Abraham’s life was his obedience to God. Thus we might point out the key to the lives of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and many others. In the text the apostle gives us the secret of Moses’ life. We read, “He endured as seeing Him who is

invisible." Moses had a vision of the unseen. Some time, perhaps at the burning bush or on Mount Sinai, Moses got a glimpse of the invisible world. More than this, he saw God, and the vision transformed his life and enabled him to endure the trials and disappointments of Egypt and the wilderness.

First, The existence of the unseen.

Life is a mystery. This world of sense is surrounded by another which cannot be seen, but which is real. Every thoughtful person realizes that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II. Cor. iv. 18). Many things which we prize most cannot be known fully by the physical senses. Confidence, truth, faith, love and other vital and essential facts, are spiritual in their nature and expression. This unseen yet real world seems to be shut out from us by a thin veil. Sometimes we can almost penetrate it and we feel like brushing aside the film that obstructs our gaze.

Second, The vision of the unseen.

In all ages men have tried to penetrate this unseen world. In olden times wise men at-

tempted to unlock the secrets of the future by means of alchemy, magic and other crude devices. Today spiritualism, theosophy, hypnotism and other occult systems are futile efforts to unravel the mysteries of life. The advancements of science in invention and discovery are the only trustworthy knowledge we have of the secrets of life.

The unseen world cannot be fully known by investigation. Much, however, may be learned by experiment. But only the fringes of the invisible can be grasped by the reason of man. Revelation is the only method by which the finite can come to the knowledge of the infinite. In all ages God has at times drawn the curtain aside and given His people a view of the unseen and future world. More than this, He has revealed Himself unto His servants. No life can be strong and fruitful without this vision of God.

It was because Abel got a view of Calvary that he presented his lamb and was justified by faith. Enoch was the first witness to Christ's second coming (Jude 14). It was his vision of the millennial glory of Christ that

enabled him to walk with God three hundred years. Thus it might be shown that every person whose name is recorded in this chapter had a vision of God, and it was this fact that made their lives strong and fruitful.

There are certain conditions which must be met if we would have a vision of the unseen. One of these is *spiritual sight*. For physical vision *sight* is as necessary as *light*. If there is no eye to receive the light objects cannot be seen. So there must be spiritual sight before we can see the invisible. Sin has blinded our eyes and darkened our hearts (II. Cor. iv. 4). The Holy Spirit will give us *sight* as well as *light*. Thus Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, the eyes of their understanding be opened (i. 17, 18). We next receive this organ of spiritual vision. We must have this inner sense of touch which responds to the spiritual world around us.

Again, waiting upon God is necessary in order to see Him. The time element in vision is essential. We all remember the old process

of photography when we often had to sit before the camera a half a minute in order to have a picture taken. Modern photography is instantaneous in its working. But there is no new process in spiritual photography. Our hearts are like a sensitive plate and in order to have God revealed there we must sit at His feet a long time. The troubled surface of a lake will not reflect an object. Our lives must be quiet and restful if we would see God.

Third, The influence of the unseen.

There is power in the sight of some things to affect one's life. Persons have gone insane from witnessing murder. Violent people have become gentle from seeing a person engaged in prayer. A quiet sunset will bring peace to a troubled heart. Thus the vision of God always transforms human life. Jacob saw God at Jabbok's ford and became Israel. The vision of God transformed Gideon from a coward into a valiant soldier. The vision of Christ changed Thomas from a doubting follower into a loyal, devout disciple. But men have had visions of God since Bible times. William Carey saw God and left his shoemaker's bench and went

to India. William Cassidy got a vision of God and went to China. He died before he reached there, but he became our first missionary to the Celestial Empire. Hundreds of noble consecrated young people at our Missionary Institute have received a vision of God and today are in the uttermost parts of the earth, working for the evangelization of the heathen and the speedy coming of our Lord.

We all need a vision of God. Two things especially it will give us :

1. The true perspective in life.

We all recognize the value of perspective in art. Without it a picture would have no background or foreground. A life without perspective is muddled and indistinct. It lacks expression and impression. The vision of God focuses our lives. All the lines of a Christian life should converge on the second coming of Christ. To this glorious event everything should contribute. So many people live aimless lives. They are drifting. They have no object in life save the enjoyment of the present moment. Seeing God will give an aim to our lives.

2. The highest inspiration in life.

Nothing inspires the heart like a vision of God. It freshens one's life and gives one enthusiasm in service. There is danger lest our spiritual life may become dull and monotonous. Physical energy soon becomes exhausted. A sense of duty alone will not make service for Christ a joy. But a vision of God by the eye of faith will make our Christian life energetic, enthusiastic and fruitful. An ancient scientist said that he would move the world with his lever if he could find a place for his fulcrum. So we will move the world for Christ if we can find strength and enthusiasm for our task. The vision of God will furnish the inspiration we need.

PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE

“He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast” (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

IN human affairs promise and performance are so often disassociated that it is high praise to say of a man that “his word is as good as his bond.” But even where perfect veracity exists unforeseen circumstances may prevent one from carrying out his word. With God, however, promise and performance are inseparable. What the Lord says, that He will do. “Hath God spoken and shall He not do it; hath He promised and shall He not make it good?” “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away.”

But with God, not only are promise and fulfilment inseparable, the two are one. Promise is performance. Not only is God’s word sure; it is in itself achievement. “He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.” The speaking was the doing; the thing stood fast in the command.

This was true in creation. The immediate reference of this verse is to the work of God in creation. The divine record is, "God said, Let there be light * * * * and there was light." The utterance of the word of command brought light into existence. In Hebrews we are told that the world was made by the word of God. This may indeed refer to Christ, for the spoken word is the symbol of the Incarnate Word.

Again, this is true in redemption. One of Christ's last words on the cross was, "It is finished." This refers to the completeness of His work of redemption. To the finished work wrought by our Saviour nothing has since been added, nor could anything be added. "By the one offering He forever perfected them that are sanctified." Of course, we must distinguish between the eternal purpose of God and the outworking of that purpose in time. Strictly speaking, it is only with respect to the eternal purpose of God that we can predicate completeness. As yet the outworking of the divine plan is incomplete.

Furthermore, this is true in Christian experience. In the believer's growth in grace and in

the knowledge of Jesus Christ this inseparableness between the divine promise and the divine performance is manifest. In every promise of God there is a latent performance. It only remains for faith to claim its present fulfilment. In a sense faith may be said to be the power that converts promise into performance.

There is a beautiful illustration of this principle in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. The incident may be called the tenses of faith. The interview between Jehovah and Abram is graphic and vivid; and when rightly understood possesses thrilling power. In verse two Jehovah declares that He *will* make His covenant with Abraham. It is a definite promise and in the future tense. The patriarch believed the Lord and fell on his face in adoration and gratitude. With reference to the present incident this was Abram's first step of faith. But in verse four the Lord declares, "My covenant *is* with thee." This was moving out of the future tense into the present. However, as the patriarch knew the Lord, there is no doubt that he met Him in the present and believed the divine word. This was Abram's second step

of faith. But there was a third step. In the following verse Jehovah declares, "A father of many nations *have* I made thee." This time the Lord moved out of the present tense into the past tense. Promise had become performance. The thing spoken was done; and now it only remained for Abram to put his seal to the transaction. But the patriarch did not falter. With firm tread he took the third and last step of faith. He received the new name of Abraham as the seal that what God had promised He was able also to perform. Every time he used the name Abraham it was his confession that so far as he was concerned God's promise was as good as fulfilled.

We are told that we are the children of faithful Abraham, if we walk in his footsteps. This is one of the steps of faith that Abraham took. Beloved, God is trying to get us to stand where Abraham stood. True faith always takes its stand in the past tense—that God has already done the thing He has promised.

This is the only way we got our salvation. We came before God as sinners, and believed His word that we were saved by the death of

Christ on the cross. By faith we simply took the reconciliation with God that was already ours. As we believed without waiting for feeling, the guilt of sin was removed and a sense of peace came into our souls.

Again, this is the only way the afflicted one ceive the Holy Spirit. He must believe that Christ died to deliver him not only from the guilt but also from the power of sin. He must not only see his inheritance but claim it by faith. As he thus takes his stand in the past tense and believes that God has bestowed upon him the gift of the Holy Spirit, it will all be made real in his experience.

Again this is the only way the afflicted one can get his healing. At first perhaps he believes that the Lord *will* heal him. But this is only the future tense of faith. It usually results in the postponement of the blessing if not in failure to receive it. Next, he may venture to believe that the Lord undertakes his case. This is the present tense of faith. It indicates progress, but does not insure victory. The sufferer must take one more step. He must move from the present tense into the past

tense of faith. He must boldly claim that the work is done. He must say without waiting for signs of improvement, "I am every whit whole in the finished work of Christ." As he steadfastly maintains this aggressive attitude, God will make faith reckonings blessed realities.

Beloved, the past tense of faith is the only place of rest and victory. The future tense amounts only to hope. Faith is simply saying "Amen" to what God says. If the Lord has spoken anything to you, remember that *it is done*. You may not see it yet, but it is done just the same. For example, if the Lord has told you that He wants you in China, begin to count yourself there now. Live in China in your love, in your interests, and in your prayers. Look at everything that happens from the China side. Try to see everything as you will see it when you are really there. This will cheer you in the waiting time. It will save you from discouragement. It will enable you to discount your trials and temptations. It will bring joy where there is sorrow, strength where there is weakness, rest where there is con-

flict, and victory where there might otherwise be defeat.

Over against every promise that the Lord enables you to claim write in golden letters, "He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast."

THE BREAD OF EARTH AND THE BREAD OF HEAVEN

"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3).

TO every careful reader of the story of Exodus the question will naturally occur, When the land of Canaan lay so near Egypt by caravan route, why did the Lord lead His people so many years in the trackless wastes of the desert? In part the answer is, that by going through the land of the Philistines the souls of the people would have been discouraged by war (Ex. xiii. 17). Again, thirty-eight of the forty years' wanderings are explained by the fact that the Lord kept Israel in the wilderness until the generation that failed to enter the Promised Land at His command had perished. But there was a deeper reason for the long sojourn of the chosen people in

the desert. At the time of the Exodus the Israelites formed little more than an unorganized horde. Generations of bondage had dulled their minds and made them indifferent to spiritual things. They were the chosen people, but did not have much knowledge of the Lord God of their fathers. They had inherited the covenant promises, but did not fully understand and appreciate them. The people lacked moral discipline. They needed spiritual instruction. They were not fit to inherit the Promised Land. Now, the wilderness life was intended to give them the necessary preparation. It was a school of moral discipline and of religious experience. Here they were taught to know God and trained to trust Him. In the words of the text, the Lord "humbled them and suffered them to hunger and fed them with manna which they knew not neither did their fathers know; that He might make them know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

The wilderness life of Israel is in many ways typical of our earthly pilgrimage. The lessons

the Lord taught the Israelites then, He is trying to teach His people now. The spiritual significance of the pillar of cloud and fire, the wells of Elim, the manna, the smitten rock and other wilderness experiences of Israel is to teach us to turn away from natural resources and find in God the true Source of our life for spirit, soul and body. All these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come (I. Cor. x. 11).

In His conflict with the devil in the wilderness Jesus appropriated the words of the text to Himself (Matt. iv. 4; Luke iv. 4). The lesson they teach was not for the Israelites alone but for believers in all ages.

Perhaps a paraphrase of the text will bring out its meaning into clearer light: The Lord does not want us to live wholly on the natural plane, nor wholly on the supernatural plane; but He wants us to live on a plane where the natural and supernatural are alike recognized and harmoniously blended.

We have two divine illustrations of this recognition and blending of natural and super-

natural elements, viz., the character of the Bible and the person of Christ.

In many respects the Bible rests on the natural plane. It is an intensely human Book. It is the work of about forty different writers, and was composed during a period of about fifteen hundred years. It contains history, poetry, prophecy, doctrine and truth in many other forms. The characters it describes are human and their utterances and actions are defective and often sinful. The heart is painted true to life with all its lights and shadows. In all the range of literature no work more intensely human can be found. But the Bible is a supernatural Book. It is the Word of God, divine, inspired, infallible. Its different writers were animated by the Holy Spirit. One plan, one design marks the Scriptures, so that the different parts though composed in various countries and under widely differing conditions fit together to form one symmetrical and harmonious volume. Antitype succeeds type, and history fulfils prophecy. There is progression without variance of teaching, and variety without conflict. The remarkable fact is that the natural

and supernatural elements of Scripture blend imperceptibly together. There is no evidence of mechanical manipulation; there is no discoverable line of cleavage. The two do not stand side by side, but interpenetrate and coalesce. The human letters of the Book spell out the divine words of life. Any attempt to separate the two destroys both.

The other divine illustration is the person of Christ. In Him as in the Scriptures the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine, are united. He who was Jesus of Nazareth was also the Son of God. Jesus was intensely human. Evidence of this was His birth of a virgin, His experiences of hunger, thirst and weariness, and His death on the cross. But Jesus was divine. Evidence of this was His own witness and His Father's testimony, the miracles He wrought, and the sins He forgave, and the worship He received from His followers. The two natures in Christ were inseparable, imperceptibly united in one personality. In every thought, word and deed of our Lord these two natures were present, not act-

ing independently of each other, but united in personal oneness.

These illustrations will help us to understand the true plane of Christian living,—the plane that does not ignore the bread of earth, yet recognizes the necessity of feeding upon the bread of heaven. It is true that the Bible is inspired and Christ is divine, and that for this reason they are unique and stand in a class by themselves, not to be compared with human experiences or things of this earth. And yet in the normal Christian life there should be a recognition and a blending of both the natural and the supernatural not unlike that found in the personality of Christ. In becoming a child of God the believer does not cease to be a son of Adam. At the same time that he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit he is dependent upon earthly resources. In entering upon the sphere of the Church and its heavenly relations he does not withdraw himself from the world with its business obligations. His citizenship is indeed in heaven, but with earth he still has a relationship; his obligations to God do not release him from his duties to man. Jesus recognized

these two relationships when He said: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." But in the life of the believer these two distinct elements do not exist side by side but blend together. Christianity is not like a suit of clothes which one can wear on Sunday and discard other days. He who is a man of God on the Lord's day can not become a man of the world the rest of the week. In a word the Spirit of Christ transforms the character and transfigures the life. Every relationship and every duty is permeated by the new leaven of the Gospel.

But now having glanced at the true nature of Christian life as a whole, let us take one or two phases of the believer's experience in which the words of the text will find practical application.

First, Divine guidance.

In the matter of divine guidance there are people who are seeking to live by the bread of earth alone. By their lives they practically deny the truth of guidance by supernatural means. Of course, in a general way they believe that the Scriptures throw light on the

path of life. But they maintain that the Lord has given us minds for the purpose of self-direction. They argue that He would not have endowed us with wisdom and judgment if He had not intended us to use them as occasion requires. They rely upon their prudence and common sense. They hold that the Lord does not speak personally to His people now; and consequently, all talk about the voice of the Lord and supernatural revelations of the Spirit they regard as fanaticism.

But there is another class of persons who are trying to live entirely upon the bread of heaven. They ignore the wisdom and judgment God has given them. They make light of prudence and caution. They do not seem even to exercise common sense. They believe in being guided in everything by spiritual visions and supernatural revelations. They want a special communication before they will do anything.

Now both these positions are extreme. There is truth in both views which should be recognized. The Lord surely wants us to use the wisdom, judgment and common sense which

He has given us. But He wants us also to believe that He Himself will guide us by His Spirit. And yet we should not trust our own minds in a purely natural way. We should take the mind of Christ so that His wisdom will be ours. One may be so filled with the Spirit that his thoughts, desires and actions will be under divine control. Thus it will not always be possible to distinguish between the dictates of our own judgment and the promptings of the Holy Spirit within us. Probably in most of the ordinary affairs of life the Lord thus guides us by the unconscious control of our mental operations. Yet in important matters He will let us hear His voice. In critical seasons of darkness and perplexity He will grant us the inner vision. It is unwholesome to live in an atmosphere where one is constantly looking for supernatural indications of God's will in his personal life. If we are always looking for visions we may indeed see them; but they may not come from God. If we are always listening for voices we may indeed hear them; but they may not come from the Lord. One is more apt to get a vision from the Lord

when he is not looking for it; and one is more likely to hear the Lord's voice when he is not expecting it. Let us place our lives so completely under divine control that whether the Lord vouchsafes a supernatural visitation or requires us to trust Him without it, we shall be satisfied so long as we know that "Jesus leads."

Second, Physical healing.

In the matter of physical healing there are people who are living by the bread of earth alone. By their lives they practically deny God's control and care of their bodies. They believe in the salvation of the soul and in the sanctification of the spirit; and they understand the deeper life in the Holy Ghost. But somehow they have not seen God's provision for our physical life. While they recognize health as the gift of God they rely for its preservation upon their own care and prudence. Of course, when sick they ask God's blessing upon the means used for their restoration.

But there is another class of persons who are trying to live by the bread of heaven alone. By their lives they practically deny the place and

value of precaution or care in the preservation of health. For their physical strength they depend wholly upon supernatural agencies. They maintain that because they trust God for their body it is not necessary to be careful about diet or exercise or sleep. They have no use for rules of hygiene or laws of health. They will sit in a draught and expect God to keep them from taking cold. They will go out in a rainstorm without overshoes or umbrella and trust the Lord to keep them from ill effects.

Now both these positions are extreme. There is truth in both views. Here again the natural and the supernatural should blend. The divine care of our bodies is a precious truth of revelation. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Healing is promised when we are sick and physical strength is maintained by the quickening of the indwelling Spirit. Yet there are rules of hygiene which should be observed, and laws of health which must be obeyed. He who trusts the Lord for his body should be all the more careful about diet, exercise and sleep.

But here again human precaution and divine quickening should blend. There need be no

separation even in thought between the two. The laws of health are the laws of God. We may so take the Lord even into our use of natural resources of health as that we shall recognize them as His provision for us.

Thus in all these phases of our Christian life we need the bread of earth and the bread of heaven. We must draw nourishment from God, but must not ignore the natural basis of life and strength. Of these two lessons we need especially to learn the former. The growing tendency of this age is toward materialism. The necessity of eating of the bread of heaven needs to be constantly emphasized. How expressive is the phrase, "the mouth of God"! It suggests nearness, intimacy, access. From the mouth of God came natural life when the Lord breathed into man's nostrils. From the mouth of God came spiritual life when Jesus breathed upon the disciples. If both natural and spiritual life come from the mouth of God then they are to be sustained and nourished from the same source. Let us learn to put our lips up to this great fountain of life and continually drink in strength for spirit, soul and body.

THE QUIET HOUR

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" (Gen. xxiv. 63).

A QUAIN old divine thus comments on this verse: "A beautiful *time*, a beautiful *place*, a beautiful *occupation*." Religious meditation occupies a large place in the Scriptures. David exclaimed, "While I was musing, the fire burned." Paul's exhortation to the Philippians is, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* on these things." The vital relation between thought and character is disclosed in the inspired saying, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

Life in the Orient is favorable to meditation. The East is the home of speculation and contemplation. In many ways the people of those lands live today very much as they did

a thousand years ago. The counterpart of Abraham can be seen in the modern Arab sheik. Manners and customs are largely stereotyped. The stream of commercial and social life flows on sluggishly. The spirit of the Orient is conservative. The warm climate and the even tenor of life are conducive to habits of reflection and meditation. Religious mysticism has come out of the East. Life in the Occident is the exact opposite of these conditions. It is marked by restless haste. Commercialism is the spirit of the age—the feverish pursuit of wealth. The refinements of modern civilization and the exacting demands of business leave little room for habits of quiet reflection. In consequence the quiet devotional life of believers has suffered. There is a tendency to regard even religion as a sort of business.

But whether the conditions of life are favorable or unfavorable to its exercise, quiet meditation on spiritual things should be above the influence of one's surroundings. The devotional study of the Scriptures, private prayer, and the maintenance of communion with Christ through the Spirit should be matters of con-

science. Their observance or non-observance is under the control of the will. No one has difficulty in finding time for what he wants to do; nor is there any failure or irregularity in performing one's necessary duties. Meditation along with other spiritual habits will find a place in one's life when its necessity and value in maintaining a strong, full spiritual life are recognized. When the habit is once formed a love of retirement and meditation will spring up in the heart; and then the "quiet hour" will become one of the fixed features of one's daily life. Its non-observance on any given day will be felt to be a distinct loss, due to unusual pressure upon one's time. When such neglect of the daily quiet hour does occur because of unwonted circumstances, like travel or the nursing of the sick, the first free moments should be spent in waiting upon God. The fact is that the believer should esteem waiting upon God in quiet more than his necessary food. When this is done, rules and regulations for holy living will be unnecessary. The Christian will plan for time to be alone with God and will highly prize such seasons for communion.

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The time for daily retirement with God is not so important as the season of retirement itself. Yet some hours are more favorable than others for devotion. The early morning hour is highly prized by many. It is a good thing for the soul to begin the day with God. The eventide is a favorite season with others. It is blessed for the soul to close the day with God. Some prefer the noon hour and others the time of retiring. The time for observing the quiet hour will of course readily adjust itself to one's duties and preferences. In the East the twilight hour is an especially favorable season for quiet and meditation. Late in the afternoon a cool breeze tempers the sultry heat of the day. Thus it was in "the cool of the day" that the voice of the Lord God was heard in the Garden of Eden. Jehovah chose the sweet and refreshing season of eventide to commune with Adam and Eve. So also Isaac chose that season to meditate not only upon the goodness of God but also upon his approaching union with his divinely chosen bride, Rebecca. Even in our own land the twilight hour, when the day is softly fading into the shadows of the night,

has advantages for quiet meditation (if one can spare the time) such as no other season of the day possesses.

Having seen the vital place of spiritual meditation in Christian life and considered various seasons for its exercise, let us now notice some of the benefits and blessings which it brings.

First, Apart from all religious and spiritual considerations a daily season of quiet conduces to good health. An old adage runs: "After breakfast walk a mile; after dinner rest awhile." An after dinner nap or rest is often prescribed by physicians for persons who are run down in strength. A brief period of quiet taken at any time during the day aids digestion and quiets the nerves. So even from a hygienic standpoint spiritual meditation has its value.

Second, Meditation upon the goodness of God brings a blessing to the soul. One of the charges that the Psalmist brings against Israel is that they "soon forgot His works." They did not keep fresh in their remembrance by frequent rehearsal the signal deliverance of Jehovah, as the crossing of the Red Sea and the passage of the Jordan. Of course, there are

annual festivals, as one's birthday and Thanksgiving, when a review of the past is especially fitting and when as a result one calls upon his soul to bless the Lord and forget not all his benefits. But it is a good thing every day to count our blessings. Especially when the way seems dark and the trial of faith with the accompanying tendency to depression of spirit is severe, will reflection and meditation upon the goodness of God bring lightness of heart and the new song of praise. A little refrain runs:

"The inner side of every cloud
Is bright and shining.
I therefore turn my clouds about
And always wear them inside out
To show the silver lining."

No day will be found so dark that upon reflection some bright ray will not be seen.

Two ministers met at a Methodist Conference. One said, "Rejoice with me; my horse ran away and I was not injured." His friend responded, "Praise the Lord! Now I want you to rejoice with me, for *my horse didn't run away.*"

God's daily mercies to us are innumerable. Many blessings we shall fail to notice and be

thankful for unless we stop to consider all the way that God has led even through the few hours of a single day.

Third, It is a good thing to begin the hour of meditation by letting the thoughts dwell on a passage of Scripture. It may be the chapter or verse that the Lord has given us for our morning portion; or it may be a message that the Spirit brings to our mind at the time. Pondering over God's Word puts one in the frame of mind for profitable meditation. It quickens the memory and opens the well springs of gratitude and joy. It is profitable in meditating to follow out some line of truth, or some phase of our experience, and nothing is better calculated to promote such a train of reflection than a portion of Scripture held before our minds by the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, Again, the hour of meditation conduces to the cultivation of what in mediaeval times was called the "spirit of recollection." This was the carrying of the atmosphere of the closet into the busy hours of the day. It was not a mood of abstraction which rendered one absent minded and made him useless in

the practical concerns of life. But it was a poised, balanced attitude of spirit, which carried one calm and unruffled through the duties of the day. It was a sense of God's nearness which steadied the soul and fortified it against every emergency. It is what Brother Lawrence calls the "Practice of the presence of God." It is the believer's privilege to maintain invariably an undisturbed serenity of heart and mind. This, however, is not the result of will power nor the fruit of a stoical philosophy. It is due to the keeping power of God—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Now, the quiet hour feeds this recollected state of heart and mind. From its observance the believer goes forth like a bird, resting in mid-air on outstretched wings, balanced in mind and poised in spirit, ready for anything that the providence of God may bring.

Fifth, One great advantage of the evening hour of meditation is that it enables the believer to commit definitely to the Lord the following day and to take in advance grace and

strength for its unknown duties and trials. Some one has compared this exercise to the winding of a watch. Usually every one before retiring winds his watch. The mainspring is thus coiled anew and power is given it to move the mechanism of wheels. All through the minutes and the hours of the following day the intricate system of wheels performs its function through the power given to the mainspring the night before. So it is a good thing to wind up the mainspring of our life. By communion and prayer we store up divine strength sufficient to meet all the demands of the coming day. We should take the Lord definitely for all our engagements and for all the duties that we may reasonably expect that the day will bring. We should also take Him for all the unknown things that will certainly come into our life as we go out into the world to take up our burdens and to fulfil our duties. Thus by anticipation we can fortify every weak place in our life and take grace to meet every trial as it comes. It is a blessed thing to take the Lord definitely for every minute of the time until we shall again meet Him face to face

at our quiet hour on the following evening. Such a definite committal to God of the day beforehand enables us to go forth in the morning "girded with strength unto the battle." We shall be ready and almost eager to meet the trials of the day, knowing that He will be there before us to make smooth the pathway of our feet. And then further it will be a source of strength to us just to watch our lives, as it were, through the day and see how the providences of God meet us at every turn. Very often we shall feel that this deliverance or that providence is just the very thing we took God for the night before; and the consciousness will also come of the rich blessing we might have missed if we had not prayed it all out and believed it all through with God before. When one has thus formed the habit of committing each day to the Lord before it dawns, he will recognize a distinct spiritual loss whenever for any reason the exercise is omitted.

Sixth, Finally, spiritual meditation leads naturally to communion and communion opens the door easily to prayer. In this message we have meant by meditation something entirely

distinct from both communion and prayer. These two vital spiritual exercises have their place, but the emphasis is here put upon meditation. If the hour of meditation be carefully guarded, communion and prayer will not be neglected. The three inseparably go together. Meditation is the seed ; communion is the blossom ; and prayer is the fruit.

ONE WITH CHRIST

THE union of the believer with Christ is one of the most vital and fruitful truths of the New Testament; *vital*, because it lies at the foundation of faith; *fruitful*, because it is the channel through which all the gifts and graces of the Spirit are bestowed. Four symbols are employed to set forth this union. First, the building of which Christ is the sure Foundation (Ps. cxviii. 22; Isa. xxviii. 10; Eph. ii. 20-22; Col. ii. 7; I. Pet. ii. 4, 5). Second, the bride, of whom Christ is the divine Husband (Rom. vii. 4; II. Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 31, 32; Rev. xix. 7; xxii. 17). Third, the body of which Christ is the risen Head (I. Cor. vi. 15, 19; xii. 12; Eph. i. 22, 23; iv. 15; vi. 5, 29, 30). Fourth, the branch of which Christ is the true Vine (John xv. 1-10; Rom. vi. 5; xi. 24; Col. ii. 6, 7). If the reader will consult these passages carefully he will find that the truth especially emphasized in them all is the *unity* or *oneness* existing between Christ and the be-

liever. This union as set forth is not natural or moral or sacramental in character. On the contrary, it is *organic* (Eph. v. 29, 30); *vital* (Gal. ii. 20); *spiritual* (Rom. viii. 9, 10); *indissoluble* (Matt. xxviii. 20; John x. 28; Rom. viii. 35-39; I. Thess. iv. 14-17); and *mysterious* (Eph. v. 22; Col. i. 27).

In this message we desire to present four respects in which the believer is one with his Lord.

First, One in the participation of His life.

The union of the soul with Christ is a vital one. The believer shares the life of his Lord. The sap of the vine flows into the branches. So "he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit" (I. Cor. vi. 17). There are two essential characteristics of this life.

1. It is divine. In II. Peter i. 4 it is declared that through the promises of God we become "partakers of the divine nature." The life which the believer shares is the very life of Christ Himself. From God's standpoint there is no time element in the union of the believer with Christ. We were "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). We

were "in Christ Jesus" when He hung on the tree; in Him when He rose from the dead; and in Him when He took His seat at the right hand of the Father. In fact in every relationship of Christ's life, His people are in the thought of God "together with" Him. Humanly speaking, however, there is a point in experience when this union is effected. This is the new birth or regeneration, or as it may be comprehensively called, conversion. Then it is that the germ of the Christ-life is implanted in the heart; the time, so to speak, when the tiny branch begins to shoot forth from the vine.

2. It is eternal. The life which the child of God receives in regeneration is not only divine but eternal. Eternal life is not so much a matter of *duration* as of *quality*; that is, it is a new kind of life. Eternal life is the life of Christ perpetuated through the ages. Death cannot break the union between the believer and his Lord. The life of Christ implanted as a germ in the new birth will unfold and mature throughout eternity. We feed upon Christ here; we shall feed upon Him hereafter. Spir-

itual life is the earnest or "first fruits" of everlasting life.

Second, One in the possession of His Spirit.

Again, the same Spirit that rested upon Christ rests upon the believer. By this is not meant the temper or disposition of Christ, but the Holy Spirit. The "Spirit of Christ" is one of the names of the Holy Spirit (I. Peter i. 11). Two stages in the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer may be marked.

1. The baptism of the Spirit. In a sense, of course, it is true that the Spirit is in every Christian from the time of his conversion. This is the test of discipleship (Rom. viii. 9). We are born of the Spirit (John iii. 6). But the life of Christ teaches us that there is a definite baptism of the Holy Spirit, an experience entirely distinct from regeneration. Thus, Jesus was born of the Spirit in Bethlehem of Judea; but at the age of thirty He was baptized with the Spirit at the river Jordan (Luke i. 35; Mark i. 10). So in the life of the believer there should come this distinct work. Whether the entire consecration of oneself to God and the definite reception of the Holy Spirit comes immediately

after conversion or at a much later period, will be largely a matter of apprehension and realization of one's privileges in Christ. We believe that no lapse of time need intervene. See Acts ii. 38; viii. 15; ix. 17; x. 44; xix. 2.

2. The fulness of the Spirit. The fulness of the Spirit marks an advance upon the baptism of the Spirit. Like regeneration the baptism of the Spirit is a distinct act and a definite transaction. There is a time when we take Christ as our Saviour; and there is a moment when we receive the Holy Spirit as our Indweller. The fulness of the Spirit, however, while distinct from these experiences, differs in character. It is not an act, but a process; it is not a transaction, but a habit. Having received Christ (act) we grow up into Him in all things (process). Having received the Holy Spirit (transaction), we keep drinking of His fulness (habit) (I. Cor. xii. 13; Eph. v. 18). This is the place, we believe, where many true-hearted believers who are seeking for the fulness of God fail of satisfaction. They have received the Holy Spirit; yet their lives are without joy

and without fruit. Dear friend, if this is the condition of your heart, have you not overlooked the fact that the act of receiving the Spirit must be followed by the process of living and walking in Him? Are you drinking in the fulness of the Spirit? for the command in Ephesians v. 18 means, Be ye *habitually* filled with the Spirit. You take ample time for your meals. Do you devote enough time to receiving your spiritual food? Perhaps the neglected quiet hour explains your unsatisfied spiritual longings. Get alone each day with God at a time when there will be no intrusion; open your whole being to the free operation of the Holy Spirit; consciously and voluntarily drink in His fulness until every part of your being is filled and thrilled with His divine presence and power.

Third, One in the fellowship of His sufferings.

Again, union with Christ brings the believer into fellowship with His sufferings. This truth, like a scarlet thread, runs all through the New Testament. Paul prayed that he "might know Christ and the power of His

resurrection and the *fellowship of His sufferings* becoming conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10, R.V.). We read in II. Timothy ii. 12, "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him." There are three relations in which we are called to partake of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

1. His death. It is only one side of the truth to say that Christ died for us. The other side is that we died in Him. Christ's death was our death. The believer who would enter fully into union with Christ must recognize this fact and not shrink from its experimental meaning. It may be said that our union with Christ finds its starting point in His death. This is the significance of baptism; in this beautiful yet solemn rite we die in Him by faith to all our old life, and rise in Him to all His life divine (Rom. vi. 2-4; Col. ii. 12). This was the foundation of Paul's personal religious experience (Gal. ii. 20). In the death of Christ we put off the old man and put on the new man. The New Testament epistles constantly recognize this truth as the foundation of all

appeals to a life of holiness and service (Col. iii. 11).

2. His reproach. It should never be forgotten that from the standpoint of the world the cross of Christ is a reproach, and that he who exalts it in his life and teaching will be subject to persecutions. Jesus said to His disciples, "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated Me before it hated you. * * * Remember the word that I said unto you, a servant is not greater than his Lord. - If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you" (John xv. 18,20). Paul reminds Timothy that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii. 12). A woe rests upon the believer when all men shall speak well of him (Luke vi. 26); whereas a blessing rests upon him who is falsely persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matt. v. 11). The believer who bears Christ's reproach lives well pleasing unto God (I. Pet. ii. 20).

3. His self-sacrificing ministry. In the briefest and yet most comprehensive statement of Christ's life in the New Testament we read that He "went about doing good" (Acts x. 38).

Paul tells us that Christ pleased not Himself (Rom. xv. 3). Christ lived for others and finally died for them. In this unselfish and self-sacrificing ministry of the Lord the believer is permitted to share. Paul was called to fill up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the sake of the Church (Col. i. 24). There is a sense in which the believer has a vicarious ministry. He is called to a life of self-denial and self-denying service for others (John xii. 24-26; xiii. 14-16; I. Pet. ii. 21, 22). Many of our trials and afflictions are not merely for our own discipline but to fit us to minister comfort and blessing to others (II. Cor. i. 3-8).

Fourth, One in the inheritance of His glory.

Finally, the oneness of the believer with Christ finds its consummation in the inheritance of His glory. The familiar motto, "No cross, no crown," is true to the teaching of the New Testament; and just as surely as we bear the cross we shall wear the crown (II. Tim. ii. 12). It is true that in the purpose of God the believer has been exalted with Christ and made to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph.

ii. 6). Our conversation or citizenship is in heaven. Yet in experience our life and walk are on the earth; and the realization of our inheritance in Christ's glory is still future. We may briefly mention two aspects in which we shall be inheritors of Christ's glory.

1. His reign. When Christ returns, His people are to reign with Him upon the earth (Rev. xx. 4). Now the Church is in a position of humiliation; then it will be in a place of exaltation. It is a sad mistake for the Church to be seeking for a kingdom while the King is absent; to be seeking for worldly position and honor while her Lord and Master is despised and rejected of men. This is the time of service, not of coronation; and the loyal believer will be satisfied to wait till the coming age for the rewards of faithfulness to Christ (I. Cor. iii. 11-15).

2. His person. God has called each one of His children to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. viii. 29). Some features of Christ's likeness we take on here through the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; but His full image we shall not wear till the coming age.

David exclaimed, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." The Apostle John said, "Beloved, now are we the children of God and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He shall be manifested we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (I. John iii. 2, 3).

"One in the rapturous hour,
When He shall come for His own;
Raised by His glorious power,
I shall sit down on His throne.
All that He has shall be mine,
All that He is I shall be;
Robed in His glory divine,
I shall be even as He."

SECURITY AND SERENITY

"But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell securely and shall be quiet without fear of evil" (Prov. i. 33).

IN all our Bibles there are underscored verses that have been given to us as seeds of promise or made real in times of need. This verse is marked in my Bible. At a crisis in my life it came with help for the present and hope for the future.

A beautiful thing about this verse is that it is for every one. The word "whoso" or "who-soever" breathes the spirit of the Gospel. It is said that a man named John Smith once declared that he was glad the Bible did not say that John Smith might take the water of life freely; for as there might be other John Smiths in the world he could not be sure which John Smith was meant. But when the Bible said, "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely," he was confident that he himself was included in the universal invitation. Beloved, "whosoever" just means you. Leave a

blank where the word occurs and write your own name down; then you will get the exact force of the expression.

By reading over the chapter you will notice that it is wisdom that utters her voice in this verse. What are we to understand by wisdom here and elsewhere in the Book of Proverbs? Some scholars think that it means prudence, good judgment, or wisdom personified; but in the New Testament Christ is called the "wisdom of God." Consequently, if we substitute the word Christ for wisdom we shall get the inspired meaning. "Whoso hearkeneth unto *Me*" then, may be rendered, "Whoso hearkeneth unto Christ;" or, "Whoso hearkeneth unto the Holy Spirit," for it is Christ speaking by the Spirit.

This verse contains a most beautiful and comforting promise, to which is attached a simple but essential condition.

The promise is twofold: security from the presence of evil and serenity without fear of evil. In the first place, the promise insures protection from danger, safety from harm and security from evil. The word "dwell" may be rendered "lie down" or "recline." The protection

promised is not confinement within the strong walls of a frowning castle, but rather the safe guarding of personal watchfulness. "I, Jehovah, am its Keeper, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." God Himself will keep us from all harm. He is our sufficient security from all evil. If we hearken to Him His invisible but omnipotent presence will shield us from dangers seen and unseen. With David we shall be able to say, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep, for Thou, Jehovah, alone makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. iv. 8).

In the next place, the promise includes serenity of heart and mind. Serenity is not the same as security. The one means protection from real danger. The other means deliverance from the dread of evil. It is possible for one to be safe within a strong fortress and yet live in mortal terror of imaginary foes. The knowledge that no harm can touch one does not always quiet the heart and reassure the mind. On the other hand it is possible to stand in the presence of danger without the fluttering of the heart or the quickening of the pulse. And the

Lord delivers us not only from "fightings without but from fears within."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3). "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7).

A timid old lady who was crossing the ocean for the first time became greatly agitated in a violent storm. "Is there any fear?" she asked the captain. "No, my good woman," he replied, "there is no fear, but a great deal of danger." This reply reassured her, and she went to her stateroom and slept in peace. So Jesus in the presence of great danger keeps the soul from alarm. "There shall no evil befall thee." "What time I am afraid I will trust in the Lord." "I will trust and not be afraid."

Now let us look at the simple but essential condition upon which rests this glorious promise of security from evil and serenity from alarm. "Whoso *hearkeneth* unto Me." This condition is hearkening unto the Lord. What is it to hearken? Of course, hearkening means obedience. Whenever God speaks we must

mind; and whatever He commands, we must implicitly obey. But hearkening implies more than obedience. Before one can obey God's will he must know what His will is. Thus hearkening also means to attend diligently to what God says; to listen intently when He speaks; and to inquire persistently what His will for us is. "Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

But before one can know God's will he must be quiet before Him. And so hearkening further includes the act and practice of waiting on the Lord. When the hunting dog strikes the trail, he pricks up his ear and listens. The mother gets the little child to listen by saying, "Hark!" in hushed accents. So if we would know the will of God and hear His voice when He speaks, we must get quiet at His feet. We must cease from ourselves and our own ways. The clamorings of our own hearts must be stilled. The wandering and opposing thoughts of our minds must be quieted. We must even get ourselves into an attitude of physical and mental repose before Him. Silence must reign

throughout our soul; stillness must pervade our entire being.

Beloved, this simple condition of hearkening, while easy to talk about and attractive in prospect, is most difficult of attainment. In fact, we cannot hearken to God ourselves; the more we try the less we shall succeed. The very attempt to get still before God is apt to stir our hearts with conflicting emotions and excite our minds by distracting thoughts. But we do not have to hearken by our own efforts. In this respect the Holy Spirit will help our infirmities. All God's commandments are enablements. The Holy Spirit Himself will be in us the ability to be quiet, the power to know His voice and the strength to do His will.

This little verse will bring measureless comfort and limitless strength, if its secret is once learned. When God once speaks we can trust His word, "For God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Hath He spoken and shall He not do it, or hath He promised and shall He not make it good?" It matters not whether our foes compass us on every side; if we hearken to God He

will deliver us. It matters not whether our friends predict the approach of evil; if we hearken to God He will carry us through every danger. It matters not whether our own hearts faint and falter and our minds are filled with nameless dread; if we hearken to God, He will be better to us than all our fears. If we take Christ to be our Counsellor He will follow it up by being our mighty God.

THE TWO LAWS

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death” (Rom. viii. 2, R.V.).

A GOOD artist makes effective use of contrasts. In all the paintings of a famous artist in the galleries of the Louvre in Paris there is some hideous object in the foreground to enhance the beauty of the scene. Thus in one picture a slimy serpent is seen coiled at the feet of a beautiful child. The Holy Spirit is a divine Artist. The pictures He paints always have an appropriate setting. Thus, at the close of the seventh chapter of Romans, over against the shout of victory, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” is the wail of despair, “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?” One moment we hear the clanking of the chain of the devil’s captive; the next moment we hear the pæan of praise of the Lord’s freeman.

In Romans viii. 2, we find the cause of the

Apostle's exultant shout. It is the key to his deliverance from the slavery of sin. This verse reveals two laws: the law of sin and death, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Paul's release from the law of sin and death was effected by the operation of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Let us try to get a clear view of these two laws and their working. On the one hand there was a force dragging the apostle downward. It was the law, whose working wrought sin in his members and would bring spiritual death as its fruit. Its movement was constant, inflexible and inexorable. On the other hand there was a power lifting the apostle upward. It was the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, whose working wrought out victory over sin, and brought life instead of death. Its movement was also constant, inflexible and inexorable. These two opposing laws were of unequal strength and belonged to different spheres of action. The law of the Spirit of life was higher and stronger; it met and overcame the lower law of sin and death, and thus brought deliverance and victory to the apostle.

One or two illustrations will help us to understand the operation of these two laws. The corrupting and germinating of the seed, and the deterioration and invigoration of the body are analogies of the working of higher laws in the spiritual world.

A seed is planted in the ground. At once it is seized by forces which carry it down to death. It is disintegrated; it decays and becomes a mass of corruption; and at last it dies. Apparently, the little seed is entirely destroyed. But enshrined within it is a germ. It has a strange power to resist decay and death. It is the principle of vegetable life. Soon up from that mass of corruption there springs a tiny sprout; "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." It may be said that the law of vegetable life in the seed has freed it from the law of death.

Again, a human being is born into the world. At once the body comes under the law of decay and death. There are strange forces both inside and out that tend to weaken and destroy it. In the food that nourishes, and in the air that sustains life there are germs of disease.

But there is a power within that resists these attacks. It is the mysterious principle of life. Natural vitality helps us to ward off disease. Of course in the end the physical frame succumbs to the weakness or sickness; but for many years a frail constitution often battles successfully against inherited tendencies to disease. Thus it may be said that the law of physical life frees us from the law of disease.

This verse yields the secret of deliverance from two dominionships, viz.: sin and disease.

First, Victory over the dominion of sin.

Sin is a terrible reality. Every soul in its aspirations for a nobler life is conscious of forces dragging it down to lower levels. So real and constant is the working of this power that the Apostle Paul speaks of it as a law. On every side are enticements to evil, while pitfalls beset the pathway. But the worst form of the foe is not in our environment; it is in ourselves. Within the struggle for victory is fiercest. The law of sin works in our members. There is an inclination to evil in our own hearts. There is a perverseness in our natures. Evil solicitations from without find a ready response from

within. Moreover, the knowledge of the right supplies no motive power to do the right. Indeed, the revelation of God's high standard of character and conduct only aggravates the struggle and makes our failure to attain this standard the more certain. The seventh chapter of Romans is a picture of a saved man struggling in his own strength against this law of sin which works both within and without.

What is the divine secret of deliverance? It is not resolution, nor reformation, nor any other form of moral or legal effort. Victory is won through the operation of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Deliverance comes by giving up the struggle ourselves and letting the Holy Spirit release us from the unequal conflict. The life of God will flood the soul and lift it above the dominion of sin. However, the law of sin is not destroyed; but its working is suspended and rendered of none effect by the higher law of the Spirit of life. A simple illustration will make this clear. Gravitation is a force that works throughout the universe. Objects upon the surface of the earth it attracts toward the center. For example, a

book held in my hand is drawn downward by a force proportionate to its weight. But in my hand the book seems no longer to be drawn downward. It rests in the air, or moves upward in defiance of gravitation. Is it, however, no longer acted upon by this law? Certainly; but the law of life manifested in the movement of my arm has freed the book from the control of the law of gravitation. While in my hand and controlled by its movements the book is freed from this law. The law of life has delivered it from the law of force. Now, in just the same way is the soul freed from the law of sin by the law of the Spirit of life. The law of sin does not cease to work. Its agency is still as powerful as before. Sin is not dead, but the believer has become dead to sin (Rom. vi. 11). Thus, by the operation of the law of the Spirit of life the believer is freed from the law of sin. This is God's way of holiness. This is the divine secret of sanctification. If it is a theory, it is a theory that works. It is a practical power unto godliness to all who believe.

Second, Victory over the dominion of disease.

In the illustration used above, it was shown how from birth the physical frame is played upon by insidious influences that make for its weakening and destruction. This was seen to be the working of the law of death. When the body is well and strong it may have power to ward off these attacks. But the physical body of the average person is none too vigorous; many have constitutional sources of weakness; and even the most powerful frames often fall victims to disease. Thus an unequal battle for health is constantly waged. In many instances the struggle is hard and lasts as long as life itself. The skill of physicians can accomplish much, but at best the aid of human resources is limited; and in many cases natural vitality and medical science are unavailing.

Now, what is the secret of deliverance from this law of disease? It is the operation of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. God has not delivered our souls from the dominion of sin and left our bodies under the power of disease, which is one of its fruits. For those who walk in His holy will He has made provision for deliverance from physical bondage.

Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. His office work is to quicken our mortal body (Romans viii. 11). But here, again, the law of disease, so-called, is not destroyed. Our bodies are not removed from their natural environment. The food we eat and the air we breathe are still filled with deadly germs and noxious influences. Moreover, constitutional weaknesses are not always taken away. Even the sources of disease may be allowed to remain. But just as the book was freed from the force of gravitation by the power of life in the hand, so our bodies come under the influence of a higher law which lifts them above the power of weakness and disease. Thus the law of death that works in our members is suspended and made of none effect. Just as light banishes darkness, so the inflow of the divine life into the soul frees it from the power of sin; while the overflow of this divine life into the body counteracts and delivers it from the downward pressure of weakness and disease.

There are two all-important facts in connection with this glorious truth which need to be noticed.

The first is the sphere of the operation of this law of the Spirit of life. It is "in Christ Jesus." It is a well known fact that laws are restricted in their application, and that to come under the influence of a given law one must be in the sphere in which the law works. Thus the laws of England are different from the laws of the United States. An Englishman in England is not subject to the laws of this country, and *vice versa*. But if an Englishman should come to the United States, and become a citizen, then he would be subject to the laws of this country. Now it is "in Christ Jesus" that this law of liberty works; and to come under its operation we must be "in Christ Jesus." The way to get into Christ Jesus is to get out of ourselves, and the way to get out of ourselves is to die out. We must identify ourselves by faith with His death and resurrection (Rom. vi. 1-11).

The second truth is the two aspects in which the believer is freed from the law of sin and death. One is the doctrinal aspect, and the other is the experimental aspect. These two need to be carefully distinguished. Doc-

trinally, or historically, so to speak, the believer was freed from the law of sin and disease by the work of Christ on the cross. When He died our salvation was finished. By His death unto sin Christ purchased the deliverance of His people from its power. But the experimental aspect is quite another matter. By this is meant the believer's experience of deliverance. This may take place at any time that he apprehends, and appropriates by faith, his purchased freedom. Whenever he does this the Holy Spirit makes real *in* Him what Christ has made real *for* Him. May the Lord open the eyes of many sin-sick and disease-sick Christians to see and claim their inheritance in Christ.

Several points already touched upon incidentally require emphasis:

First, Both these forces are laws.

If the downward power of sin was a law working inflexibly and inexorably, while the upward power of life was merely an influence without regularity and constancy of operation, our deliverance would not be fully assured. But the Spirit of life is also a law; not

an abstract principle, but a divine person. For, the Holy Spirit Himself is the law of life. He meets and overcomes the downward pressure of sin and disease with a movement more inflexible, irresistible and irrevocable than law itself.

Second, These two laws are of unequal strength. If they were of equal or nearly equal force, there would not be rest and victory. On the contrary there would be constant struggle and incessant conflict. But the Holy Spirit is so much higher and mightier than the power of sin and the strength of disease that He vanquishes them. Indeed sin and disease are swallowed up by holiness and health.

Third, This victory over sin and sickness is not secured by a single act, but by a continuous process. The law of the Spirit of life continually works in our hearts and bodies. As we abide in Christ Jesus the Holy Spirit keeps us in the place of victory. If the pressure of temptation is heavy, His grace is there to meet and overcome it. If the law of sin is threatening to overpower us, the Spirit of Holiness is there to give victory and peace. There need be

no sense of effort or struggle in our own strength. We have simply to recognize our position in Christ Jesus, and count by faith on the working of the law of life within Him. The Lord will thus make faith's reckonings glorious realities. In the same way by the Spirit of life our physical strength is renewed day by day. For our weariness He gives us His rest; for our weakness He substitutes His strength; for our exhaustion He imparts His vigor. Here again there need be no sense of effort or struggle in our own strength. We have simply to recognize that "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones," and that "in Him we live and move and have our being." As we thus claim by faith our redemption rights, the Spirit of God will breathe upon our mortal frames, quickening them into newness of life.

This is a glorious secret. May it bring victory to many struggling hearts and fainting bodies.

UNION AND COMMUNION

“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts” (Zech. iv. 6).

IN the fourth chapter of Zechariah is recorded one of the most beautiful prophetic visions in the Old Testament. Zechariah was a prophet of the restoration. His messages strengthened the hands of Joshua and Zerubabel in the work of rebuilding the temple. While his prophecies have an immediate application to his own times, yet they find their largest fulfilment in Christ, and through Him in the Church and in the individual believer. Let us first look at the vision and then at its spiritual significance.

First, The vision.

As an aid in understanding the vision let the reader imagine himself in a darkened room, prepared, so to speak, for a stereopticon exhibition. Let him further imagine that each detail of the vision as it is mentioned is thrown upon the screen in succession. The first thing that

Zechariah saw was a golden candlestick or candelabrum, such as was in the tabernacle and later in the temple. It had seven branches whose lights were fed from a bowl at the top. There was nothing unusual in this; and the sight must have been a familiar one to Zechariah. Next, he saw two olive trees growing, one on the right and the other on the left of the candlestick. In this there was nothing strange, except perhaps the proximity of the trees to the candlestick. For a time it would seem that Zechariah saw nothing else; but after his talk with the heavenly messenger his attention was arrested by a most singular thing. Two olive branches, one from each tree, bent toward the candlestick. From the reservoir at the top two golden pipes extended, which met the branches, perhaps midway. This was all he saw; but the object of the arrangement was at once apparent. It was this: as the olive trees ripened their fruit the oil flowed down through the branches and the pipes into the reservoir of the candlestick. Thus, the sevenfold light being continually fed was kept perpetually burning. Now let us group these details

into a vivid picture. There was the glistening candlestick with its seven-branched light brightly burning. On either side was an olive tree, green and fresh in its beauty and fertility. The oil, though unseen, flowed steadily and continually into the reservoir. As the prophet gazed upon the scene, he saw no priest to tend the lights. He saw no shears, snuffers or oil can. The trees perpetually ripened their fruit; the oil constantly flowed; the light incessantly burned. It was a silent, beautiful scene. The hand of man was absent. It was God's own provision for giving perpetual light.

Second, The meaning of the vision.

As Zechariah beheld the vision, the message came to him, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." With the application of the vision to the prophet's own times our purpose does not concern itself. It may be stated, however, that the vision was given undoubtedly to encourage Joshua and Zerubbabel in their difficult work of rebuilding the temple. In this work they were hindered in many ways. It seems probable that the candlestick represented the temple on the familiar

principle that a part may stand for the whole. It would be natural, then, that the two olive trees should stand for Joshua and Zerubbabel as "the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." But of course back of them stood Jehovah Himself to strengthen their hands and to bring to completion the noble work which they had undertaken.

It is the spiritual application of the vision which here concerns us. Bible scholars are not agreed in their application of all the details, but the spiritual significance of its main features seems to be clear enough. Let us first try to understand what the vision means as a whole and then notice some of the spiritual lessons suggested by its several parts.

It seems to be clear that the candlestick represents the Church and also the believer, for whatever is true of the Church as the body of Christ is true also of believers as members of that body. It also seems clear that the two olive trees represent the Lord, perhaps in His twofold office of Priest and King. It is the opinion of some Bible scholars that the two

olive trees symbolize Christ and the Holy Spirit. But it is sufficiently accurate for the spiritual significance to see that while the candlestick stands for the believer the two olive trees represent the Lord. It is clear then that the spiritual teaching of the vision is two-fold: *union* and *communion*. The connecting branches between the trees and the reservoir set forth the believer's union with Christ. The silently flowing oil and the steadily burning light beautifully symbolize the communion of the believer with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Now let us gather together some suggestive spiritual lessons from the details of the vision.

First, The position of the candlestick in the midst of the two olive trees sets forth as clearly as a symbol can the abiding of the believer in Christ. Even in the Old Testament this truth was foreshadowed. Thus, the opening verse of the ninety-first Psalm declares that "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." This is the deep spiritual teaching of the allegory of the vine and the branches. Paul told the Athenians that "in Him we live and move

and have our being." A line of a modern hymn runs: "God is our home, forever," a paraphrase of the opening statement of the ninetyeth Psalm, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Surely, this vision most beautifully symbolizes the permanence and security of that life of the believer which is "hid with Christ in God."

Second, The union of the believer with Christ is a living union. This is set forth in the connecting branches and pipes. Organically and vitally we are one with Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit"—this expresses our spiritual oneness with Him. "We have the mind of Christ." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"—these verses express our mental or intellectual oneness with Christ. "The Lord is for the body, and the body for the Lord." "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones"—these verses express our physical oneness with Christ. Our Lord is the Source of our life and as we are vitally one with Him through the Spirit we may draw from Him, as our risen Head, the supply of every need for spirit, soul and body.

Third, That which vitally connects us with Christ is the Holy Spirit who indwells us. Christ is in heaven and we are upon earth. But the Holy Spirit not only makes Him real to our consciousness, but puts us in touch with Him. This truth is set forth by the oil which is always a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this spiritual oneness is disclosed in the fact that the fruit of the tree is the fuel of the lamp.

Fourth, Because our union with Christ is permanent, our communion may be constant. There was no interruption in the flow of the oil from the trees to the reservoir. The flame was not intermittent but constant. The communion of believers in Christ is often interrupted and broken; and the consciousness of their fellowship is intermittent. This need not and should not be so. Recognition of the permanence of our union with Christ and of the privilege of unbroken fellowship will help to maintain an attitude and a habit of conscious and blessed communion.

Fifth, The candlestick burned brightly, not through any efforts of its own, but simply by

receiving the oil from the olive trees. Its light was fed from a source outside of itself. This is true of us. Christ is our Life. Jesus said, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Self effort interferes with God's working.

Sixth, While the source was inexhaustible yet the seven branches received just enough oil to keep the light burning. Too great a supply would have been as bad as too little. So the Lord regulates the supply of His grace to our need. The promise is, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." Christ taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Seventh, By the mechanism of the vision the supply of oil was kept fresh and new. **There** was nothing stale or old about it all. Thus our spiritual manna falls on the morning dew so that we may gather it fresh and new for our strength and nourishment.

THE THREE R'S

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 11).

"Rest in the Lord" (Psalm xxxvii. 7).

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again, I say, rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

THERE is such a thing as an open secret. Paul tells us one in Philippians. He says, "Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret (R.V.), both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 12, 13). The secret that Paul reveals to us is that because Christ dwells within him, he is content under all conditions; in abasement and in exaltation; in fulness and in hunger; in satisfaction and in need.

There is an open secret which I have learned and which I desire to pass on to others that they too may enjoy the blessings which its possession brings. It is the secret of the three

R's: not the three R's of secular education, "reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic"; but the three R's of spiritual education—*reckon*, *rest* and *re-joice*. Like the three legs of a stool, these three things will give firm support for a satisfactory Christian experience. If one be lacking the spiritual life will be unsteady.

First, Reckon.

After having unfolded in the sixth chapter of Romans under the symbol of baptism the believer's death and resurrection with Christ, Paul gives in the eleventh verse the secret of the practical realization of this glorious truth. This is the principle of reckoning. "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the Greek the same word is used in James i. 2: "My brethren, *count* it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." "Reckon" or "count," in the New Testament, is a word that expresses not a state of feeling, but an attitude of faith. In its signification and usage there is absolutely no idea of emotion; it is a mathematical term, denoting a cold calculating operation of the reasoning faculty. It

expresses an estimate based on facts and not a conclusion founded on feeling. When a merchant balances his books, he reckons upon the result; for figures cannot lie.

The regulating principle of Christian life is an attitude and habit of reckoning. For example, take one instance of the use of the word "reckon" or "count." James says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Let us see just what this means. Take a sheet of paper and instead of counting up your blessings write down all your trials. Make a complete list of all your "fightings without and fears within." Don't leave anything out—doubts, temptations, misunderstanding, and misrepresentations, persecutions (if you can scare up any), the seductions of the world, the flesh and the devil, injuries real or fancied, sickness, discouragement, separations, bereavements—put them all down. Now draw a line and add up the column. What a dark picture your eye runs over, doesn't it? Well, what total do you get? "ALL JOY." No, no; not *all sorrow*, or *all discouragement* or *all failure*; but ALL JOY. That is God's total. He says,

"Count it all joy." That is, set it down to your account as all joy. Never mind the feeling nor the appearances of things. Thus, reckoning or counting is simply saying "Amen" to what God says is true. Now, if it is all joy what then is to be done? Why, of course begin to sing and praise the Lord and He will soon make "faith's reckonings glorious realities."

Reckoning is the pole star of our walk with God. When the sky is overcast and the sun does not shine by day nor the stars by night, the mariner with chart and compass plots the course of his ship by dead reckoning. Then when the sky clears he verifies his dead reckoning by his instruments. So when the spiritual sky is overcast and feeling seems to die in the heart, the believer must steadily pursue his heavenly course by the dead reckoning of faith. Then when the sunlight of God once more bursts upon the soul he will find that the rudder of faith has kept his bark on the right course. Thus, his feelings will confirm his faith and teach him more and more not to

sail by fluctuating emotions but by the inflexible principle of faith.

Second, Rest.

There is a divine order in these three words. After reckoning comes rest. Rest is just another name for trust. Reckoning and resting supplement each other. If one is resting in the Lord he may be sure that he is reckoning on His word; and if one is reckoning on the divine word, he may be sure that he is resting in God. There is no rest without reckoning, and there is no reckoning without resting; for reckoning is faith; and rest is trust; and faith and trust always go together. The presence of the one may be tested by the presence of the other.

While inseparable, yet reckoning and resting are not identical. It is not uncommon, however, for a Christian to fancy that he is trusting the Lord when the evidence of faith is conspicuously absent from his life. Indeed, it is one of the delusions of the adversary to make one think that he is believing God while all the time the lack of the spirit of trust is manifest in his life. On the other hand, one may easily

persuade himself that he is trusting God when a spirit of doubt really controls his actions. For this reason we emphasize rest as well as reckoning as the secret of a victorious Christian life. The word "rest" in the Scriptures may often be rendered "wait upon," or "be silent unto," God. It is a spirit of quiet confidence and undisturbed serenity of heart and mind. Perhaps an illustration will bring out its meaning into clearness. You have an estate to be settled and you seek the services of a competent lawyer. Two steps are necessary for you to take before he can successfully look after your interests. First, you must commit your case entirely into his hands. Secondly, you must trust him implicitly, content to leave everything to his care. The first step we may call reckoning; you show your faith in the lawyer by engaging his services. The second step we may call rest; you manifest your confidence in your legal adviser by trusting him. To extend the illustration, suppose now you should manifest anxiety after having committed your interests to the lawyer. You begin to be anxious about the matter and find yourself worrying whether after all

he is going to do the right thing by you. If you expressed your fears to the lawyer himself he would certainly be justified in giving up the case. Business cannot be transacted without mutual confidence. So when you commit anything to the Lord you must not only believe that he undertakes the matter in hand but you must trust Him; you must rest as well as reckon. Worry and trust mutually destroy each other; uneasiness of heart or mind is incompatible with rest. Guard well then against any spirit of disquiet or restlessness. Doubt is the hammer that drives the entering wedge of worry. With the loss of trust faith will be destroyed.

Third, Rejoice.

Joy is the crowning word of this series. Rejoicing is the fruit of reckoning and resting. If we have reckoned on God's faithfulness and are resting in His word surely we shall rejoice in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again, I say rejoice." Joy is the barometer of the believer's experience. Low pressure indicates a barren and wintry state of the heart; while high pressure indicates tropic-

al luxuriance of "the love life of the Lord." Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize the necessity of joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." Happiness and joy are not the same. Happiness is conditioned upon circumstances, but joy is independent of external surroundings. Happiness is a human product; joy is a divine fruit, even the fruit of the Spirit. Joy is not always spontaneous. It is a gift of God. Just as God drew water from the rock at Rephidim so He can cause joy to spring up and abound.

But joy is not only the result of reckoning and resting, it may also be the cause of faith and trust. Joy is seed as well as fruit. Rejoicing is a congenial atmosphere for faith and trust. In other words, if one will persistently cultivate a spirit of rejoicing under all circumstances, he will find it easy to believe God, while trust will spring up spontaneously in his heart. In fact, any one of these three things will produce the other two; but perhaps the

shortest cut to faith and trust is through the persistent cultivation of a spirit of joy.

Reckoning, resting and rejoicing—what a beautiful trinity of Christian graces! How simple they are! How easy to obtain and yet how glorious their results in character and in conduct. Beloved, learn this secret of the three R's, and pass it on to others.

TWO OMNIPOTENT FORCES

“For with God all things are possible” (Mark x. 27).

“All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark ix. 23).

THESE verses tell us of two omnipotent forces,—the power of God and the faith of the believer.

In some ways the power of God is absolute, and in other ways it is conditioned by faith. In the work of creation and redemption the omnipotent power of God is absolute. Before man was created God brought the heavens and the earth into existence and upheld and preserved the orderly course of nature. Moreover, in redemption God wrought wholly independent of man. We read that the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world. Faith had no part in the work of God in creation, nor in the work of Christ in redemption.

In the realm of grace the power of God is conditioned by faith. In the Gospels we are told that in some cities Christ could not do

many mighty works because of unbelief. Indeed, in many instances He made faith the condition of receiving His healing power. Thus, to the poor distracted father at the foot of Hermon Jesus said, "If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth." The man had just made a pitiful appeal to the Master: "If Thou canst do anything have compassion on us and help us." In His reply Christ virtually said: It is not a question of My power but of your faith; thus clearly showing that the manifestation of divine power in the realm of grace is conditioned by faith. In the ministry of the apostles we see the same vital relation between God's power and man's faith. Thus at Lystra before Paul restored the impotent man we are told that the apostle looking upon him perceived that he had faith to be healed. Here then we see the omnipotence of faith; it is omnipotent not in itself, but in its vital connection with the omnipotent power of God. In one aspect faith is all weakness, in another aspect it is all strength. Considered alone faith is impotent; considered in living relation to the power of God it is om-

nipotent. As an *end* in itself faith is nothing. As a *means* to an end it is everything. Thus, the weakness and strength of faith is the weakness and strength of a condition. Take one or two illustrations of this truth. A coil of copper wire has of course a certain commercial value, but taken by itself it is practically useless. But if properly strung and insulated it becomes an electric conductor over which messages may be sent thousands of miles. So faith is the connecting wire which attaches our hearts to the throne of God. It is nothing save as it is the means by which the divine life and power touch our lives. Again, up in the hills is a clear sparkling spring. Down in a farmyard in the valley is a gushing stream of cool sweet water. How does the water from the spring get to the farmyard? A pipe has been laid which conducts it thither. The pipe itself is of little value but becomes all important as the channel through which the water flows. So faith is the channel through which the springs of God pour their living water into the valley of human need.

Several years ago the government blew up

the rocks in Hell Gate in the East River that had been so long a menace to navigation. The work was entrusted to General Newton. For months the submarine rocks were drilled and charged with dynamite. Wires were strung from each charge to the shore and there connected with General Newton's office. In the office was a little button by the pressure of which the rocks would be blown up. The explosion was set for a given day. A notification was printed in all the newspapers directing the factories, stores and houses for miles around to have all windows fastened securely, and to have glassware and all other easily breakable articles put safely away. At the appointed time a representative company gathered in General Newton's office. A whole city breathed expectantly. One of the most gigantic engineering feats of the century was about to be accomplished. At a given signal General Newton's little four year old daughter stretched forth her tiny hand, and gently pressed the electric button. A terrific explosion followed which shook Greater New York from center to circumference. A mammoth column of water and gi-

gantic rocks were thrown hundreds of feet in the air. The work was completely successful and the channel at Hell Gate was open. Tiny baby fingers had set free the awful power of dynamite which had done the work. So faith is the baby fingers that puts into operation the forces of God's omnipotence. Faith, so to speak, presses the button; God does the rest.

The possibilities of faith are as infinite as God Himself. A little key has been put into our hands that will unlock all the treasures of the universe. The air was full of electricity before Franklin's time, but no one knew how to utilize it until he brought it down to earth by the simple means of flying a kite with a wire and a key. Many believers are like people famishing in the midst of plenty. They have not discovered nor are they making use of the omnipotence of faith. Faith is the key to the possession of our full inheritance in Christ. Faith reinforced by prayer is the secret of "the evangelization of the world in the present generation." Faith brings the supply of every need for body, soul and spirit. Again, faith is the measure of blessing. Christ's standard was,

"According to your faith be it unto you." This refers not to the *quantity* but to the *quality* of faith. It doesn't take a bonfire to blow up a powder magazine; a spark is sufficient. Christ taught that faith as a grain of mustard was enough to remove a mountain, and uproot a tree. The mustard seed is small, but it is a living germ; so faith may be small but it must be unmixed with doubt. A grain of doubt destroys faith just as a scratch on the back of a mirror ruins it.

Beloved, such an omnipotent power put into our hands by God entails a commensurate responsibility for its use. The exercise of faith is not only a glorious privilege, it is a solemn duty. The greatest sin is unbelief. If we do not use this lever of faith in God for the spiritual uplifting not only of our own lives but of other lives bound to us by the ties of blood and of common service in the Gospel of Christ, we shall be like the man who hid his talent in a napkin and shall deserve and receive his punishment.

There is encouragement for all in the fact that faith is the gift of God. It is not a natur-

al endowment which only the favored few may enjoy. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit. The fact that faith is divine is the explanation of its omnipotence. Anything God-given partakes of the nature of God. Faith is just one of the manifestations of God in the soul. Again, the fact that faith is divine explains our responsibility for possessing and using it. If we have not the faith of God it must be because we have not asked God to confer this divine gift upon us. If we are not exercising the faith that God has given it must be because we have failed to realize that God's commandments are enablements.

PREPARATIONS OF GRACE

“The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isa. l. 4, 5).

THIS is one of those passages in the prophetic books of the Old Testament which commentators are at loss whether to refer to the prophets themselves or to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, our purpose does not require us to touch this question, for we are concerned not with the primary meaning of this passage nor with its typical import, but rather with its spiritual application to believers. These verses tell us of five prepared things,—*preparations of grace*, they may be called. They are: the prepared soil, the prepared seed, the prepared tongue, the prepared ear and the prepared heart.

First, The prepared soil.

It is a familiar figure to compare the hu-

man heart to soil. Jesus does this in the parable of the sower. The expression "him that is weary" is the phrase in verse four which we take as the prepared soil. It is a beautiful and suggestive phrase. The word translated "weary" means also "weak" or "faint." The world is full of faint and weary hearts, hungry for the bread of life. Glance over a congregation assembled in the average church on a Sunday morning and see what spiritual hunger is depicted in their faces. Gaze at your fellow passengers in the street or ferry boat and notice what suffering and dissatisfied faces they have. Then look at the darkened and even desperate faces of the heathen world. Everywhere are fainting and weary hearts. Of course this condition of spiritual hunger is not always recognized. Men follow the mad pursuit of wealth. Women enter the giddy world of society. Theaters are filled and pleasure resorts of all kinds are thronged. The face of the world is light and gay, but its heart is heavy and sad. Then again, God is specially preparing many hearts to receive the good seed of the Gospel. Sorrow and suffering are

wasting many lives. Business reverses and domestic bereavements are saddening many homes. God is breaking up the fallow ground. The soil is being softened by tears of sorrow. All around us are hungry hearts.

Second, The prepared seed.

The Word of God is likened to seed. But there is seed and seed. One kind of seed will mature in one soil while another kind of seed will thrive best in different ground. In verse four the phrase which we call the prepared seed is "a word in season." In the Revised Version this word is said to "sustain" him that is weary. The whole Word of God is seed, but its various parts are adapted to different purposes. This fourth verse gives a good definition of what is often spoken of as a message. A message is "a word in season." It is the truth of God applied to the present need of the hearer. There are seeds in the Word of God adapted to all kinds of soil. There are messages applicable to "all classes and conditions of men." For the impenitent there is a word of warning and judgment. For the sinner there is a word of salvation. For

the distracted there is a word of peace. For the sorrowful there is a message of joy. For the weak there is a word of strength. For the embittered there is a message of divine love.

Third, The prepared tongue.

After the soil has been prepared and the right seed selected the sower must do his work. The seed must be scattered. In this case the sower is the tongue. The Lord must prepare the tongue to speak the word in season to him that is weary. In the Epistle of James we learn the power of the tongue for good or for evil. It is a little member, yet it may be set on fire of hell. By nature the tongue is the spokesman of the evil heart and is the fountain of cursing and wickedness. The tongue needs to be converted and sanctified in order that it may speak the words of blessing and goodness. What grace can do for the tongue is seen in the fact that God has chosen this little member as the means of the evangelization of the world. The cloven tongues at Pentecost were the symbol of the human tongue tipped with the fire of the Holy Ghost.

But the tongue not only needs conversion; it needs discipline and training. We read that the Lord God hath given me "the tongue of the learned" ("the instructed," R. V.); the tongue has to learn how to speak a word in season. An illustration of this fact is the way a baby has to learn to talk. Slowly he learns the meaning of words and acquires the art of putting words together in sentences. Another illustration is the slow and often painful process by which one learns a foreign language. So the Lord has to teach us to speak the words of life. The language of Canaan is not natural to the tongue. Again, how prone we are to speak our own words. The language of ambition, of self-seeking, of man's wisdom presses upon us for utterance. But we have to die to all this. We have to learn, like John the Baptist, to be simply a voice, content to let the Lord articulate that voice with the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. We must learn by much discipline and training to let our own messages die no matter how beautiful and eloquent they may seem, and be willing to speak "the word in season" which God

will surely give if we will patiently wait for it.

Fourth, The prepared ear.

Back of the tongue that speaks the word in season is the ear that receives it from God. So, in the next place the ear must be prepared to hear aright. What a beautiful expression, "He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The ear has been filled with the wax of heedlessness and indifference; and now God has to bore out the ear so that the sense of spiritual hearing will be acute and sensitive. The physical sense of hearing must be educated. The musician needs a trained ear just as an artist needs a trained eye. The finer discrimination of tones and colors comes only after patient discipline. In the same way the ear of the believer must be trained to distinguish the voice of the Lord. The soil may be prepared and the seed at hand and the sower ready to scatter it; but he may not know the right seed for the right soil. In like manner, the believer may be ready to speak God's message to weary hearts, but he may not know just what that message is. The right message

is received by the prepared ear. When the Lord first spoke to Samuel in the night he did not know His voice and ran to Eli to find out what to do. Often God speaks to us, but we do not know His voice. We have not got the ear of the learned. This verse tells us that God wakes us in the early morning and speaks to us. Sometimes we find ourselves awake at an unusually early hour. We immediately begin to wonder what the matter is and are apt to chafe a little in our spirit over the prospect of the loss of an hour or two of sleep. We try again and again to fall asleep and toss around restlessly until our usual hour for getting up. Beloved, has it occurred to you that it is God that often thus awakens us that He may whisper His heart messages in our inner ear? Our days are so filled with work that we do not make time to get alone with God, so He wakes us up early for communion and prayer. Oh, how much we lose at such times by restless tossing on our beds and by chafing in our spirit over losing a little sleep. The next time you have this experience get very quiet; look up into the face of your heavenly

Father and say with little Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." This is the way and the only way to get the prepared ear.

Fifth, The prepared heart.

The last preparation of grace mentioned in this passage is the prepared heart. "When the Lord opened mine ear I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." It is true that the word heart does not occur, but rebelliousness and turning backwards can only be spoken of the heart and the will. Even back of the ear is the heart that needs to be controlled by God. The soil, the seed, the tongue and the ear may all be prepared, but if the heart be rebellious the grace of God is frustrated. What a beautiful series these five preparations of grace form. And the wonderful thing about them is that we may run them either backwards or forwards. One direction will be the divine method of working, and the other direction will be the human method of working. These verses begin with the soil and work back to the yielded spirit. This is the human method which works from without toward

the center. But God starts at the center and works outward. So He begins by preparing our hearts. When the heart is prepared He can reach the ear; when the ear is prepared He can reach the tongue; when the tongue is prepared He can give the message; and when the message is received He can sustain through us him that is weary.

INWROUGHT AND OUTWROUGHT PRAYER

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v. 16).

THIS verse tells us three things about prayer :

The kind of man God hears,
The kind of prayer God answers,
The kind of answer God gives.

Elijah is set forth as the divine illustration of this verse ; consequently, let us turn to his life for light upon these points.

First, The kind of man God hears.

There are two expressions which describe the character of the man God hears, when he prays ; these are "of like passions" and "righteous."

Elijah we are told was a man of like passions with us. The word "passions" is not to be understood in the sense of lusts ; it signifies rather "nature," as the marginal reading gives it. The meaning is that Elijah was not

an angel nor a saint as the word is commonly used; he was a man intensely human, and subject to the frailties and infirmities of the race. In a word, he was a man just as we are. Recall the character of Elijah and observe how like us he was. He was a rugged man by nature and by habit, a child of the desert, a veritable Bedouin courier and scout. He was capable alike of fiery indignation and of almost womanly tenderness. In his zeal for Jehovah he rebuked king Ahab for his wicked reign and slew at Mount Carmel four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal; yet he became frightened at the threat of Queen Jezebel and "ran away from a woman." He became discouraged; and, lying under a juniper tree in the desert, wished that he might die. Poor Elijah! How much like us he was! At how many points he touched our common life.

Again, *Elijah* was a righteous man. There are places in the New Testament where the word "righteous" is equal to "perfect"; as for example, "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Here, however, the word means "upright," "sincere,"

“true.” We know this partly because the word occurs in the Epistle of James. James is the apostle of practical righteousness; he does not make fine ethical distinctions like Paul. For another reason we know that “righteous” here means sincere and upright because it has an Old Testament application, and uniformly throughout the Old Testament the word “righteous” does not signify moral perfection. Thus God said to Abraham, “Walk before Me and be thou perfect” (Gen. xvii. 1). Abraham had been zig-zagging; now the Lord wanted him to walk straight; not to wobble, but stand upright. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, but he was righteous. He was a sincere, upright, true-hearted man. He loved God and like Caleb of old followed Him wholly. With all his frailties and infirmities, however, Elijah’s spirit pointed Godward, just as the needle points toward the pole. He delivered God’s messages without fear or hesitation. He rebuked sin and pronounced judgment in high places. When the whole nation was going after Baal he thought that he alone stood true to Jehovah. Faithful Eli-

jah! As he was like us in his nature, so may we be like him in his devotion.

Beloved, this is the kind of man God hears. He does not expect us to be angels or saints. But he does expect us to be upright, sincere and true. Those whom God accepts are men and women living on the ordinary plane of life with frailties and infirmities. This just means you and me; but we must be righteous. If we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us. We must put away all known sin from our hearts. We must not indulge in things questionable or doubtful lest our prayers be hindered. We must live void of offense toward God and man.

Second, The kind of prayer God answers.

This verse also gives us the character of the prayer God answers. The Authorized Version describes it as "the effectual, fervent prayer." The Revised Version renders it quite differently,—"*The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.*" The Greek word of which these are translations comes from a root which gives us our English words "energy," "energetic," "energized." Literally,

then, we might read, "The energized prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Breaking up this expression "energized prayer" we find two thoughts underlying it. An energized prayer is a prayer that is first *inwrought* by the Holy Spirit and then *outwrought* by the same Spirit. In a word, then, the prayer that God answers is first put into our hearts by the Spirit, and then prayed out through our hearts by the Spirit. Elijah on Mount Carmel furnishes an illustration of this kind of prayer. After the slaughter of the prophets of Baal the prophet said to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of abundance of rain" (I. Kings xviii. 41). Whence came the sound of abundance of rain? The earth beneath was withered and parched. The burning sun beat down fiercely from a cloudless sky. Not a breath of air was stirring. How did the prophet get the sound of rain? Why, the rain was falling in his heart. The sound of the windstorm fell upon his inner ear. The time for the rain had come; and the Lord had put it into His servant's heart

to pray. The prayer for rain was being inwrought in Elijah's spirit.

But now notice the next step. "And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down to the earth and he put his face between his knees." What does this mean? Why, this is the next stage of the prayer. This was the outworking on his knees of the prayer that God had already put in his heart. The attitude is expressive of intensity and earnestness. James tells us that Elijah "prayed earnestly." The literal rendering is, "He *prayed a prayer*." See the prophet on his knees. He is wrestling with God. His mind is exalted to a high pitch. His physical frame is tense with deep emotion. Ah, the Spirit of God is praying out through him the prayer that has been laid upon his heart. Seven times he sends his servant to look out over the sea, and seven times he closes in with God in an agony of prayer. At last the lad reports the appearance of a little cloud, arising out of the sea, like a man's hand. It is enough. The answer has come. It is time for action.

Beloved, the kind of prayer that God an-

swers must be first inwrought and then outwrought by the Holy Ghost. God lays upon your heart some burden, and as one has recently said the answer to prayer is in the burden itself. In a strange way the Lord puts upon your heart the conversion of some soul, the need of some saint under pressure of severe trial, or the lost condition of the heathen world. This is the first stage of prayer, a prayer inwrought by the Holy Ghost. This burden is not of your own choice and you cannot get out from under it, try as you will. Now, you have to pray the matter through to victory. Like a fever that has gotten into the system the thing has to work itself out. You may say, if the Lord puts the burden of prayer upon the heart and the assurance of the answer is in the burden, what is the need of praying about it; will not the answer come anyway? Although this is a profound mystery it touches the very philosophy of prayer. It is just because the Lord puts the burden on your heart with the assurance of the answer that you have to pray. Prayer doesn't make God more willing to answer; nor does it make

the answer more certain. But by divine appointment it is a necessary process in getting things from God. It is by prayer that our own hearts are prepared to receive the answer. By prayer difficulties are overcome and obstacles removed. Undoubtedly, prayer in some mysterious way enables God to send the answer. Consequently the outwrought prayer is as necessary as the inwrought prayer. Elijah's praying seven times on Mount Carmel does not mean that we are to pray exactly seven times or seventy-seven times. Of course seven is the number of perfection; and the fact that Elijah prayed seven times simply teaches us that we are to keep on praying till God removes the burden and gives us the victory. Never mind delays; they simply try our faith and develop our patience. When the Lord thus puts the spirit of prayer in your hearts just take hold of the horns of the altar and resolve to hang on till something gives way. Say with Jacob, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." When you get so you can say *that*, the victory will soon be yours. .

Elijah knew when to cease praying and be-

gin acting. He did not wait for the storm clouds to fill the sky and the rain to fall in torrents. As soon as he saw the cloud like a man's hand arising out of the sea he began to give directions to Ahab for protection from the coming storm. The time for praying had ceased; the time for action had come. So we must recognize the place of praise as well as the place of prayer. There is a point beyond which supplication may be said to hinder the answer, for it is evidence of unbelief. This point is reached when God rolls away the burden of prayer from our hearts and implants the conviction that He has heard and answered. After that, the spirit of praise and thanksgiving is the surest evidence of faith and the quickest method of realizing the full answer to our prayers. Beloved, learn to recognize the answers to your prayers in your spirit rather than in your circumstances. Don't wait for appearances to confirm God's word. Remember that the little cloud means a thunder storm. And the spirit of joy and praise means that God is working out in your life the full victory. "He giveth songs in the night."

Third, The kind of answer God gives.

In James we read, "The heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit." Heaven and earth comprise the universe. May not the meaning be that when a righteous man prays in the Spirit the answer that God sends touches the universe? Not only is the immediate need of the man himself supplied, but forces are set in operation which cause streams of blessing to flow to the whole world. But may not the meaning also be that to answer prayer which He Himself has inspired the Lord will lay under tribute the resources of His omnipotence? The power of heaven and earth is at the disposal of a saint on his knees. The fertility of the earth and the wind and rain of heaven are under God's control.

Some years ago a western city was visited by a cyclone. It was Sunday afternoon and the superintendent of a Sunday school was sitting on his piazza with his three motherless children. He saw the sky blackened and recognized that his home was directly in the path of the storm. Quickly kneeling with his children he prayed the God of the winds to spare

their lives. His prayer was answered. It was found the next day that within three blocks of this godly man's home, the path of the cyclone had changed. Nay, God Himself had diverted the cyclone. Surely in this case the prayer of a righteous man had availed much.

The God of Elijah is still our God; but it takes Elijah's faith to call forth His power.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

“Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of His servant? He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah and rely upon his God” (Isa. 1. 10, R.V.).

WHAT shall the believer do in times of darkness? To many this will sound like a strange question. It will be asked, “Has the believer anything to do with darkness?” Is it not written, “God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all”? Moreover, Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Surely, such Scriptural statements as these seem to settle the matter. Yes, they do; so far at least as the darkness of sin and unbelief is concerned. If such darkness overtake the believer, it is because he is out of the will of God. But the darkness spoken of in this verse is not the darkness of doubt or sin. It is rather the darkness of ignorance and uncertainty; the

darkness of perplexity and confusion, not of heart but of mind. In this sense of the word times of darkness come to the faithful and believing disciple who is walking obediently in the will of God; seasons when he does not know what to do, nor which way to turn. Literally, the word "darkness" means "dark places." For every Christian at times the spiritual sky is overcast with clouds. The clear light of heaven does not shine upon his pathway. One feels as if he were groping his way in the darkness.

We may be certain that the darkness referred to in our text is not the darkness of doubt and disobedience, because of the character of the man who has this experience. "Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of His servant?" The expression "among you" refers, of course, to the people of God. The man is not outside but inside the household of faith. He is said to "fear" the Lord. In the Old Testament the word "fear" comes to mean very much the same as "love" in the New Testament. It is not the slavish fear of terror and bondage, but the godly fear of confi-

dence and freedom. Moreover, this man is said to obey the voice of "Jehovah's servant." Jehovah's servant is, of course, Christ. The word "obey" may be rendered "hearken." This, then, is the character of the man that is walking in dark places, that is in trouble, and that has no light. He loves God sincerely, and obeys Him implicitly.

Beloved, is not this you? While you may not be willing to profess to be on a plane of Christian experience, yet, if you are God's child at all, you must love Him sincerely and obey His voice implicitly. It is to you, then, that this verse declares times of darkness will come. Indeed, no believer lives without them. Joseph got into a dark place in Pharaoh's prison. Moses must have found dark places in the wilderness during his forty years' sojourn there. The psalms abound in allusions to similar experiences. David often got into a tight place, but the Lord always helped him out again. Paul was often put into hard straits, and he assures us that we shall have them too. Listen to him, "We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed yet not unto despair; pursued

yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed (II. Cor. iv. 8, 9, R.V.).

But what shall the believer do in times of darkness; listen: "Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon his God."

First, Let him trust in the name of the Lord.

The first thing to do is to do nothing; just *trust*. This is a hard thing for poor human nature to do. Out on the western plains there is a familiar saying which runs on this wise, "When you're rattled, don't rush." Josh Billings used to say, "When you don't know what to do, don't do it." These homely sayings just hit the nail on the head. The believer who has no light surely does not know what to do; therefore he should do nothing. "Let him trust in the name of the Lord." See that steamer as she runs her nose into a fog bank. The captain knows it would be dangerous to go ahead, full steam. So he slows down, and at regular intervals blows the whistle or fog horn. Beloved, when you run into a spiritual fog bank, don't tear ahead; slow down the machinery of your life. If necessary, anchor your bark or let it swing at its moorings.

You remember when Paul was shipwrecked on his way to Rome we are told that the sailors cast four anchors out of the ship, and wished for the day. Now that is what trusting means. "The name of the Lord" just means the Lord Himself; the name stands for the nature and for the person who bears it. The word translated "trust" may also be rendered "confidence." Confidence is a hopeful trust. It is not a blind, passive submission to a hopeless state of things, but rather a confident expectation that everything will soon be made right.

Now, why do you suppose this advice is given? For the simple reason that while we trust God can work. Worry prevents Him from doing anything for us. If our minds are distracted and our hearts are distressed; if the darkness that overshadows us strikes terror to us; if we run hither and yon in a vain effort to find some way of escape out of a dark place of trial, where divine providence has put us, the Lord can do nothing for us. The peace of God must quiet our minds and rest our hearts. We must put our hand in the hand of God and

like a little child let Him lead us out into the bright sunshine of His love and blessing.

Second, Let him rely upon his God.

The next thing to do when you get into a dark place of trouble or sorrow is *to rely upon God*. To rely upon God is very much the same as to trust Him; yet there is a difference. The word "rely" may be translated "stayed": "Let him stay upon his God" (A.V.). The figure is that of leaning upon some one for strength or support. Trust in God gives you rest, but reliance upon God gives you strength. Trust precedes reliance; and until you trust, God can do nothing for you. Trust in God makes you quiet and restful even when you cannot understand things. Reliance upon God gives you the assurance not only that God understands the situation, but that He is working out your deliverance every moment you trust. You are also confident that the Lord is leading you nearer and nearer the light, and that soon you will be once more walking under sunlit skies. Not only are you to commit the dark place unto God, but you yourself are to rely upon Him. This means that you are to lean hard upon

Him. Settle down until your whole weight is resting upon God.

There is a story told of a traveler trudging along by the roadside with a heavy load upon his shoulder. A man in a wagon overtook him and invited him to ride. The weary traveler climbed up and took a seat, but continued to carry the load on his shoulder. His kind-hearted friend asked him why he did not throw his load down in the bottom of the wagon. "Oh," said the poor fellow, "it's a good deal for you to give me a ride; I could not think of asking you to carry my load too." Lots of us are just like this traveler, but God will carry both our loads and our own selves. Let us rely upon the Lord if we are in a dark place. He knows the way out of the woods. Let us climb up into His arms and trust Him to take us out by the shortest and surest road. What a beautiful expression—"His God." It is not only rely upon God, but rely upon his God. It makes the personal relation very real. David said, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." Paul said, "*My* God shall supply all your need." Beloved, the God of David and Paul is your

God and my God. We belong to Him and He belongs to us. "My Beloved is mine and I am His." This intimate personal relation gives you the right to rely upon and trust Him. Surely, His heart is grieved when we do not trust Him, and when we refuse to rely upon Him. He knows the way, let us trust Him; He can get us out of our trouble, let us depend upon Him.

In verse eleven there is a solemn warning to all those who walk in darkness, and yet who try to help themselves out into the light. They are represented as kindling a fire, and compassing themselves with sparks. Therefore, God says, they shall walk in the light of their fire, and in the sparks that they have kindled. But the light will not guide them out of their difficulty, and we are told that they shall lie down in sorrow. Now, what does this mean? Why, it means that when we are in darkness the temptation is to find a way without trusting in the Lord and relying upon Him. Instead of letting Him help us out, we try to help ourselves out. We seek the light of nature and get the advice of our friends. We try the

conclusions of our reason, and might almost be tempted to accept a way of deliverance which would not be of God at all. All these are fires of our own kindling; rushlights that will surely lead us on to the shoals. And God will let us walk in the light of these sparks, but the end will be sorrow. Beloved, do not try to get out of a dark place, except in God's time and in God's way. The time of trouble is meant to teach you lessons that you sorely need. Premature deliverance may frustrate God's work of grace in your life. Just commit the whole situation to Him. Be willing to abide in darkness so long as you have His presence. Remember that it is better to walk in the dark with God, than to walk alone in the light. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. xxxvii. 5).

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF RELIGIOUS DESPONDENCY

I. Kings, Chapters 18 and 19.

RELIGIOUS DESPONDENCY" sounds like a paradox. Religion and despondency do not seem to have anything in common. The keynote of the Christian life is joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Nevertheless, seasons of despondency do come to the faithful servant of the Lord. At such times the sense of depression is very real, and the need of divine help very urgent. For the believer who is suffering from religious despondency, the story of Elijah under the juniper tree is full of profit and comfort.

There is a popular misunderstanding concerning the experience of Elijah on this occasion. It is held that after playing the part of a national religious hero on Mt. Carmel, where he had slain four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal, he suddenly turned coward

and "ran away from a woman!" There was, however, a natural cause for Elijah's despondency under the juniper tree; and there was a divine remedy which restored the fainting and discouraged prophet once more to valiant leadership in Israel. Let us first notice the cause of Elijah's fit of despondency and then consider the cure, which lifted him out of it. We shall find that under similar conditions the Lord deals with the discouraged worker of today just as He dealt with this prophet of old.

First, The cause of Elijah's despondency.

The cause that led to Elijah's despondency was in part physical. For three years and a half he had been hunted like a wild beast by Ahab. For much of this time he had lived far from the haunts of man in a desert ravine. Moreover, he had just undergone upon Mt. Carmel a severe strain upon his physical powers. Perhaps with his own hands he had slain the false prophets of Baal. Immediately after that bloody scene he had ascended Mt. Carmel and wrestled with God in prevailing prayer for rain. Afterwards, without stopping to rest

he had girded up his loins, and run afoot like a Bedouin courier, by the side of the chariot of Ahab, from Mt. Carmel to the city of Jezreel, a distance of about twenty miles. Finally, already exhausted with his labors and under the threat of Jezebel, he had in great haste taken a long journey southward into the wilderness of Judea. Thus Elijah's body was overtaxed, and his physical powers were exhausted.

The second cause of Elijah's despondency was mental. Like his body, his mind had been much overtaxed. For one thing he had long opposed, single-handed, the idolatrous worship of Israel, and the wicked schemes of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Again, the scene of the slaying of the false priests of Baal must have been a harrowing one. Moreover, his prolonged season of prayer on the mountain top had meant a severe mental strain. He had wrestled with God with intensity of spirit. Both his mind and his body had been wrought up to a high pitch of excitement. Moreover, the threat of Jezebel came to a mind already jaded and worn. He had probably

gone a long period without eating or resting. In the desolation of the wilderness the prophet suffered a reaction from the intense excitement of the scene through which he had just passed. From one extreme of spiritual exaltation he went to the other extreme of religious despondency. Thus spiritually, mentally and physically the old prophet of the Lord was in a condition susceptible to temptation. He thought he was no better than his fathers; he regarded his life work as ended; and there lying under the juniper tree, he prayed that he might die.

Elijah is the type of the discouraged Christian worker. Such spells of despondency occasionally get possession of the believer today. Although the cause of the prophet's depression was deeper, yet it was a very little thing that threw him into that condition—the angry threat of a wicked woman. So it oftentimes takes but a very little thing, when the conditions are right, to plunge the believer into despondency. Satan always takes advantage of a tired body and a jaded mind to bring discouragement to the heart and depression to the

spirit. Thus he came to our Saviour after His forty days' fast in the wilderness; and thus he will come to us. It is when we are worn out with service or suffering that the enemy comes in "like a flood." A tired body and an overtaxed mind can offer but feeble resistance to the assault of the devil. He finds an easy entrance into the citadel of the heart. It is in such seasons of mental and physical exhaustion that we fall an easy prey to spiritual despondency. We are tempted to run away from our work. We are apt to think that our service for Christ is a failure, and that perhaps our life work is done. It would be a relief to us to get away under some juniper tree and wish that we might die. Beloved, have you ever been there? Do you know from experience how Elijah felt? Perhaps some one who reads these lines is trying to find a juniper tree.

Second, The cure of Elijah's despondency.

Having traced the despondency of Elijah to its cause, let us now notice the method the Lord took to cure him.

1. The Lord ministered to his immediate physical necessities.

It is true Elijah had run away from his work, and that he was out of the will of God. It is true also that he needed discipline. But did the Lord at once take him to task for his cowardly retreat from Jezebel? Did the Lord begin then and there to teach him the lessons he needed to learn? No; the prophet was in no condition to listen to a reproof even from the Lord. His spirit could not have stood the test of divine discipline at that time. Elijah was hungry and the Lord fed him; he was tired and the Lord gave him rest and sleep. What an exquisite picture of tenderness and sympathy; Elijah asleep under the juniper tree and the angel of God feeding him. The Lord is a good nurse.

Beloved, this is just the way the Lord deals with us when we get discouraged. Undoubtedly we are fully conscious that something is wrong in our life, and we try very hard to straighten things out; but the more we try, the more mixed things get. We find that we are too tired to think straight and too weary even

to pray the matter through with God. At such times the devil comes in like a flood. He tries to make us feel that we have done something terribly wrong, and must get hold of God about the matter. He drives us on to self-examination and self-condemnation until our hearts are distressed and our minds are distracted. We feel that there is no physical, mental or spiritual rest for us until all the tangles in our life are straightened out. But dear friends, at such a time you cannot get things straight; all efforts in that direction simply wear you out. The Lord wants you to rest in His love. He wants you to cease your thinking and stay your mind upon Him. What you most need at such a time is good sleep and a wholesome diet and plenty of fresh air, and gentle exercise for your body, and some interesting diversion for your mind. But, you say, "I need to get things straight with God; I need discipline; I need to learn many lessons." Yes; but the Lord will see to all these things when you are able to bear them. His chief concern now is physical strength and mental relaxation and spiritual invigoration.

2. The Lord sent Elijah to Mt. Horeb to enjoy a good vacation amid inspiring surroundings.

Having ministered to Elijah's immediate physical necessities, the Lord next led His servant to a place of mental relaxation and spiritual invigoration. Horeb was the mount of God. It was a sacred place in Israel's history. There Jehovah had given His law to His people. Here Moses had spent forty days and forty nights alone with God. It was a place of majestic scenery around which clustered sacred memories and hallowed associations. This was just the spot for Elijah to go for needed rest. Horeb was the mount of prayer, communion and the presence of the Lord.

Beloved, this is what God will do for us when we get discouraged in our work. The Lord knows the value of a good vacation. Jesus said to His busy disciples, "Come ye apart in the desert and rest awhile." If they had not been willing to rest at Christ's bidding, they would not have been ready to work at His command. Such a change of scenery and associations where you can meet God in solitude, will

soon tune up the body and retune the mind. It is often a great advantage to get away a little from one's work. In active service one is apt to lose the sense of spiritual perspective. One can see his work better at a distance. Especially when one is worn out in body and in mind, is an entire change a great benefit. So the Lord may send you to Keswick or Northfield or Ocean Grove or Nyack Heights, or some other equally favorable place where you can breathe a quiet and restful atmosphere.

3. On Mt. Horeb, Elijah received a new vision of himself and a new vision of God.

This was the next step in the divine treatment of Elijah's despondency. After the prophet had been rested and strengthened by a change of scenery and quiet meditation, he was ready for his lesson. The patient had been well nursed and put in good physical and mental condition before going under the Surgeon's knife. The Lord had not forgotten Elijah's spiritual welfare. The needed lessons had only been postponed until the learner was strong enough to receive them. A sojourn at Horeb

prepared Elijah for all that the Lord had prepared for him.

At the right moment the Lord tenderly but firmly asks, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Lovingly and patiently God listens to the pathetic story of His disconsolate servant. The entire scene of Elijah's restoration is not recorded. Modestly and appropriately God's heart to heart dealing with the discouraged prophet is veiled from our gaze. However, we may be sure that the Lord did not spare the pruning knife. He must have cut into Elijah's life until his heart was wounded and sore. The Lord never stops until He gets to the bottom of things; but He wounds only that He may heal us, and He causes us to mourn, only that He may minister comfort to us. But before the Lord showed Elijah his own heart, He gave him a new vision of Himself. This was what Elijah needed more than anything else. His eyes had been so long upon himself and his own work, that he needed the correcting effect, and inspiring influence of a new spiritual vision. The vision of God which the prophet received was sublime. First came the whirlwind

with its rending of the mountain. Then came the earthquake with its convulsion of nature. And then came the fire with its display of mighty forces. But God was not in the whirlwind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. These were manifestations of His power, but in them there was no revelation of His love. Afterwards, when the upheavals of nature had subsided, came "the sound of gentle stillness" as the beautiful Hebrew expresses it. This was the "still, small voice" which revealed the very heart of God, with its infinite love and tenderness. What this sweet but searching voice of the Lord told Elijah, we know not; but its effect upon him is recorded. No wonder Elijah "wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave."

Beloved, this is the sure cure of despondency,—a new vision of God. This is what the Lord is waiting to give you. It was for the lack of this that you became discouraged and despondent. The best place to get a new vision of God is in solitude. In some lonely spot, the heavens will be opened to you, and

you will get a new vision of Jesus. But you also need a new vision of your own heart. There was a cause for your despondency. If there has been no sin, there surely has been some mistake; you have missed your way and gotten out of touch with God. Perhaps you have become too much absorbed in your work. Whatever be the matter, be sure that God will deal as faithfully with you as He did with Elijah. He will give you the needed discipline and correction. He will probe deep into your heart, sparing neither pain nor humiliation. He will not heal the surface wound and allow the blood to remain impure. But the Lord will not turn His flashlight upon your soul until He has first shown you Himself. If you saw yourself revealed in the full light of God's truth without first beholding Jesus with all His loveliness, the vision would only plunge you into deeper despondency. No good can come from looking at our own hearts unless the Lord shows them to us. He does not want us to be introspective. Only harm can come to one from keeping his finger on his spiritual pulse. It is necessary, of course, that we should see our weakness and

helplessness, but only that we may forever take Him to be our strength and sufficiency. We must acknowledge our sins and shortcomings, but only that they may be put under the blood, that Christ may become our righteousness and our sanctification.

4. The Lord gave Elijah a new message and a new mission.

After Elijah had learned his lessons, and had been vouchsafed a new vision of God, he was recommissioned. The Lord sent him to anoint Elisha to be his successor, to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel and to anoint Hazael king of Damascus. Thus the prophet's experience at Horeb was the beginning of a new and larger ministry.

Thus it will be in your own life, discouraged and despondent worker. Your service for God is not finished; indeed you are not fit to die when in a state of depression. This experience will only prove to be the stepping stone to a larger and higher ministry. The vision of God on the mountain top will only prepare you for more fruitful service on the plain below. The Lord indeed may not give you a new

work. He may send you back to your old field of labor, but it will never be the same again. The work itself will seem new and fresh, because your own spirit has been renewed and refreshed by a season of isolation and communion with God. Moreover, the Lord will give you a new message. You will have a new love for the erring and the lost. The afflicted and the suffering will receive new consolation from your ministry. God will put a new spring into your life, and bring out of your service more fruit for His glory.

This is the way the Lord cured the despondency of Elijah; in the same way will He cure your discouragement and depression.

THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them" (Num. vi. 24-27).

THESE verses do not seem to have any connection with the chapter of which they form the close; indeed, they stand quite apart by themselves without context near or remote. For their significance we must turn to the work of the Old Testament priesthood. The office of the priest was threefold, namely, reconciliation, intercession and blessing. This will be clearly seen by following the ritual of the great day of atonement. On that day the priest first offered a sacrifice for the sins of the people, on the brazen altar in the court of the Tabernacle. He then carried the blood of the sacrificial victim within the veil, and sprinkled the mercy seat. Finally, he came out before the people and blessed them. It is believed that these verses constitute the formula

of blessing used by the priests. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, was also threefold. On the cross he reconciled the world to God by the sacrifice of Himself. At His ascension He entered the presence of God, and is now fulfilling for us His ministry of intercession. When He returns to the earth again, while it will mean judgment for His enemies, it will bring blessing to His own people. In a sense, Christ's earthly life foreshadowed this threefold priestly ministry. The spirit of His life was sacrificial. In the 17th of John we find the high priestly prayer He offered up to God as our Intercessor. The last picture we have of Christ at His ascension, is one of blessing; with outstretched hands, as He arose, He left with His disciples His parting benediction.

A careful study of these verses discloses the fact that they contain a threefold blessing; a blessing of the Father, a blessing of the Son, and a blessing of the Spirit. Furthermore, it will be noticed that in each instance there is a general and a special blessing.

First, The blessing of God the Father.

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee” (v. 24).

The general blessing here is, “The Lord bless thee.” The word “bless” literally means “to bend the knee.” It is one of the most common words in the Bible, and expresses that abundance and variety of benefits which God is constantly conferring upon man. It is used alike of temporal bounty and of spiritual riches. As God the Father is the Source of all things, blessing flows primarily from Him (Ps. cxxxiv. 4).

The special blessing of God the Father is expressed in the words, “The Lord keep thee” (v. 24).

The word “keep” expresses the thought of preservation and protection, which is the special office work of the Father as revealed in the Scriptures. “The Lord is thy Keeper” (Ps. cxx. 1). “I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment” (Isa. xxvi. 3). “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as we are.” “I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the Evil” (John xvii.

11, 15). "Kept through the power of God through faith" (I. Pet. i. 5). Angelic guardianship is connected with the work of the Father. "The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear Him." "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Special providences come to us through God. He saves us from perils by land and by sea. He protects us from wasting fever and deadly pestilence. All around us are poisonous influences of contagion and disease, yet the Lord keeps us free from their power. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

Second, The blessing of the Son.

The general blessing here is, "The Lord make His face shine upon thee (v. 25). This of course is simply an Oriental expression for blessing (Ps. xxxi. 16; II. Cor. iv. 6). When God makes His face to shine upon us, it is proof of His favor and acceptance.

The special blessing of the Son is found in the words, "The Lord be gracious unto thee" (v. 25). The words "gracious" and "merciful"

are connected with the same root in Hebrew; they both have a vital relation to the sacrifice of Christ. This is seen in the thirty-third chapter of Job. There the discipline of sickness is described. A man who has not hearkened to God is represented as wasting on his bed of sickness. An interpreter, one among a thousand, appears to show man "what is right for him." "Then God is gracious unto him and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." In the margin we read for "ransom," "atonement" (verse 24). The meaning is quite clear. At last the poor man is brought to see salvation by faith through the Coming One. He has found a ransom through the atonement of Christ. Now God can be gracious to him. There is a popular idea today that all God has to do is to forgive the sinner; but this He cannot do except on the basis of the atoning work of Christ. God can never show mercy or be gracious unto the sinner unless he accepts by faith the salvation provided in Christ. The publican went down to his house justified, because he had prayed, "God be merciful to me a sin-

ner." His appeal for mercy is evidence of his recognition of sin and of his possession of faith in Christ. From the cross alone can streams of mercy and grace flow to the sinner.

Third, The blessing of the Spirit.

The general blessing here is, "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee" (v. 26). Lifting up one's countenance, like making one's face to shine, is just another expression for blessing. The hiding of God's face means darkness and death; the revealing of His face means light and life (Ps. iv. 6; xi. 7).

The special blessing is found in the words, "The Lord give thee peace" (v. 26).

In the Scriptures peace is especially connected with the work of the Holy Spirit. The first symbol of the Holy Spirit in both the Old and the New Testament is a dove, and a dove is the emblem of peace. In Genesis i. 2, the word "moved" literally means "brooded"; the Spirit of God, like the mother dove, brooded over the face of the deep, bringing order out of chaos and life out of death.

At His baptism the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove descended upon Jesus and abode with

Him. It is the Holy Spirit who makes real in us what Christ has made real for us. It is He who gives us "peace with God"—the peace of reconciliation. It is He who gives us the deeper peace of communion—the "peace that passeth all understanding." It is the Holy Spirit who gives us security and serenity of heart and mind. He keeps us in a calm and holy tranquility. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

The above analysis has thus disclosed three pairs of blessings, corresponding in character to the work of each member of the Trinity. The first member of each pair is the word "bless," or an equivalent expression; while the second member of each pair brings out distinctly the special office work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In a word, from the Triune God, blessing and favor and acceptance flow to the sinner; while, in particular, God the Father keeps, God the Son atones, and God the Spirit bestows peace.

This priestly blessing closes with a beautiful doxology which contains two striking thoughts.

"And they shall put My name upon the chil-

dren of Israel" (v. 27). The imposition of God's name implies three things. First, *ownership*, "I have called thee by My name, thou art Mine." The Lord puts His name upon us because we belong to Him. We have been redeemed not by silver or gold, but by the precious blood of Christ. Second, *relationship*. God puts His name upon us not only because we belong to Him, but because we have been made partakers of the divine nature. We have been born of God by regeneration; and having the family nature, we take also the family name. Third, *authority*. To have the name of God put upon us, is to be invested with divine rights and privileges, to be clothed with divine authority. This is what the use of the name of Jesus in prayer means. To ask the Father for anything in the name of Jesus, does not mean that we tack on His name to our own requests; but it means that we come to God just as Jesus would come to God, with the same authority and right. We have, so to speak, the power of attorney at the Court of Heaven. God has put His seal and signet ring into our hands; we may use them with author-

ity. To be invested with the name and nature and authority of Christ, involves a solemn obligation, but it also confers a glorious privilege.

The last thought is, "I will bless them." Notice the change from the third to the first person. In the earlier verses, we read, "The Lord bless thee"; in the last verse we read, "I will bless them." The pronoun "I" expresses personal intimacy and love. It also expresses the personal unity of the Trinity. Why is the change made from the third to the first person? The explanation lies in the imposition of the divine name upon Israel. Israel now belonged to God; the people bore His name, and were invested with divine rights. So God's dealings with them became personal and intimate. It is not the priest who speaks now, but the Lord: "*I will bless them.*"

Beloved, what a glorious blessing this is. What more do we want than to be assured that the Father keeps us, the Son saves us, and the Spirit breathes His peace into our hearts? As Christians, we bear Christ's name. We belong to Him by redemption. We are born into

Him by regeneration, and we are clothed with divine power by the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. May I leave this benediction with you? Live in its atmosphere. Meet God, not in the third, but in the first person. When He says to you, "I have called thee by My name, thou art Mine," look up into His face with confidence and say, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine."

TRANSFORMED BY BEHOLDING

"But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II. Cor. iii. 18).

THERE are three propositions to which all believers will give their assent. First, Jesus Christ is the divine Ideal of our lives. Second, our lives come very far short of meeting this ideal. Third, it is our duty as far as possible and as fast as possible to realize this ideal in our lives. But there is a question concerning which there may be some practical difference of opinion; and that is, the way in which we shall attain our divine standard of character and conduct. How shall we measure up to all that God expects of us? Briefly, there are two ways of seeking to become Christlike; one is by *doing* something, and the other is by *believing* something. The one is the way of nature, and the other is the way of grace; the one is the Old Testament method and the other is the New Testament

method; *doing* something is of the Law; *believing* something is of the Gospel.

The purpose of the Law of Moses was threefold: First, it revealed the righteousness and holiness of God; second, it revealed the sinfulness and helplessness of man; and third, it called upon man by the effort of his own will to measure up to God's requirement. The language of the Law was, "Do this and thou shalt live." But the Law failed. It had no power to confer the gift of righteousness. It was superceded by the Gospel. However, today many believers are living and acting under the Law. They employ pledges and use will power and resort to efforts and struggles of all kinds to make themselves better. Alas, poor human nature likes to do something to help itself. But it is the old story of the seventh of Romans repeated. There Paul tells us how he struggled against his own evil nature under the condemnation of the Law; and how at last he got his eyes on Jesus, who lifted him by a new power into liberty and victory. God's method of making us holy is by requiring us to believe something. In the story of

the brazen serpent we have the Gospel in the Old Testament. The bitten Israelites had only to look at the brazen serpent to be made whole. So the prophet, speaking by the Spirit, cries, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." The writer to the Hebrews bids us look away unto Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

There are two ways to get to the top of a tall building. One is by slowly and tediously climbing up the flights of stairs. This is getting up by your own power and always means great exertion. There is a better way and that is to step into an elevator on the ground floor and be lifted noiselessly and quickly to the top. God uses the elevator plan in lifting us out of the guilt and power of sin, and into the light and liberty of holiness. Many people have a wrong idea about the story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel. They think that Jacob got hold of the angel and wrestled until he wore the angel out, when he received his blessing. But the truth is that the angel hung on to Jacob until he wore Jacob out, or rather till Jacob wore himself out; and then, when Jacob got

quiet and restful, the angel gave him his blessing. This is the way the Lord does with us. He waits until we have got all through struggling and straining and then when we have reached the end of ourselves He steps in and lifts us up into our blessing.

This is just what our verse means,—transformed by beholding. We look up at Christ with open vision and while we gaze at Him, we are transformed from glory to glory into the same image. The Greek word translated “beholding as in a mirror,” may also be rendered “reflecting as in a mirror.” Perhaps the full idea will be brought out by combining these two translations. The word “transformed” may be also rendered “transfigured”; it is the same used of the transfiguration of Christ. The glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ is not reflected from us as from a polished surface, but it irradiates us, permeating and glorifying our whole nature. If you sit where the setting sun streams in upon you through a stained glass window, the beautiful colors of the window are reflected upon you. But this

is only a superficial reflection; it does not strike within and transform your character. A little piece of tin bent and dirty will catch the rays of the sun and shine like a diamond point, but the tin has only reflected the light and remains an old piece of tin. Not so do we reflect the glory of God as we gaze upon Christ. While we look steadfastly the light of God enters our hearts and the life of God transforms them. While we look we are slowly but steadily changed into the likeness of Christ.

Now, this has a very practical application, even in little things. If there is something in your life that is not in accord with the will of God, some infirmity of temper or sinful habit, don't struggle against it. Turn away from yourself and look at Christ. Behold Him in all His beauty. While you keep your eyes on Christ, God will deal with you and take away the thing that hinders and harms, and give you deliverance. Just look, that is all. *Will* to look at Christ under all circumstances. Look steadily, constantly, persistently. This is the best means of growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. The

process may be mysterious, but the result is glorious.

A man once dreamed that he was at the bottom of a deep well. He called for help, but his cries were unheard. He tried to climb up the sides of the well, but could make no headway, and soon wore out his strength. As he lay helplessly looking up, he saw a star. It held his gaze, and he soon felt himself rising. Not willing to believe his senses, he looked down and found himself at the bottom of the well again. Once more his eye caught the star, and he was conscious of being lifted. After a while he again became sceptical and looked down, and fell back into the well. He lay in despair for a while; but for the third time looked at the star. This time he kept his gaze fixed, and was slowly but surely lifted out of the well. Beloved, Christ is our "bright and morning Star." Looking unto Him will lift us out of the bondage of sin and self. But as often as we look at ourselves, we shall fall back into the miry pit of our own helpless and hopeless struggles. But if we keep our eyes transfixed upon Him, He

will lift us out of ourselves into Himself. We shall be "transformed by beholding."

In the little acorn lies the mighty oak. But the acorn can never become the oak by straining and struggling. It must lie quiet and let the sun kiss it and the dew of heaven water it. Slowly but surely the forces of nature will cause the acorn to unfold, and out of it will be developed the majestic oak. So the seed of the divine nature has been planted in our hearts. In this little spiritual seed lie dormant the full possibilities of Christlikeness of character and conduct. But we can never grow into Christ's image by efforts and struggles of our own; we must lie still and let the sunlight of God kiss us and dew of God's grace water us. Thus God Himself will cause that little seed in our hearts to unfold and develop. Christlikeness in its full maturity will not come all at once. We shall be transformed "from glory to glory." Henry Drummond translated this phrase "from character to character." Slowly but surely we shall come into the full stature of Christian manhood. From a lower experience of grace to a higher; from one stage of holy living to an-

other; from grace to grace, and from grace to glory, God will transform us, transfigure us into the image of Christ. Our business is to behold Christ; His business is to transform us.

TRANSFORMED BY BEHOLDING.

"They say," it whispered, "that came from earth,
The great sea lay and looked on high,
When, floating aloft in the lovely sky,
It saw a fleecy cloud, so light,
So pure, so spotless, and so bright;
And it wondered whence so fleet a form
Arose, the heavens to adorn.

And more, that I had given it birth.
But how absurd to think that I
Could ever mount that lofty sky!"
And then the sea heaved such a sigh
As it watched the beauteous thing on high.

"Ah, I could never be like thee;
In the bosom of God thou seem'st to be.
Besides"—and the sea was silent now,
As it thought of its wild and fevered brow;
And how oft in its rage it had dealt a blow
That laid thousands dead in its depths below.

And yet I perceived the sea could not rest
As it looked at that beauteous thing so blest.
Then it roused itself, and said, "I will try,"
And it borrowed the wind to drive it high;
And, gathering its strength, it curled in its pride,
And dashed itself on the rocks beside;

Then, rearing a column of quivering spray,
It seemed to be borne to the heights away.

But it fell, alas! on the angry breast,
Back with its foaming, whitened crest.
Baffled and beaten it buried its head,
To hide in the depths of its ocean bed.
And it hissed as it did so, "It cannot be;
I said, I knew it was not for me."

At length the great sea lay quiet and still,
For fell despair had subdued its will;
When the glorious sun looked forth on the scene,
And gleamed on its bosom in silver sheen.
And the great sea looked in the face of the sun,
And asked if he knew what could be done;
"The moon draws me hither and thither," it said,
"But it cannot uplift me from my bed;
Nor can it transform this turbid breast
Into that thing so pure and blest."
"Canst *thou* transform me?" said the sea.
"Oh, yes," said the sun, "if you'll suffer me."
And the sun sent down a noiseless ray,
That loosened and warmed it as it lay,
And lifted it up, how, it never knew,
A fleecy cloud in the heavens blue.

Do you ken the parable, reader fair?
Can you take the lesson that's couching there?
Are you that sea with its fond desire,
Sighing and struggling to rise up higher?
Does perfect grace attract thine eye
And to attain it dost thou try?
But do baffled efforts mock thy skill,
While sorrow and anguish thy spirit fill,

And thou say'st: "In God's bosom that grace must
rest;

It never can visit my troubled breast"?

Now change thy plan, and behold yon Son.

Just rest and trust and the work is done.

Transformed by beholding Him thou'lt be,

His great salvation thou shalt see.

The process? well, that thou canst not know,

Enough for thee it is "even so,"

That lifts thee up and makes thee fit

In the heavenly places with Him to sit.

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II. Cor. i. 3, 4).

THERE are two kinds of suffering which Christians endure. One is the consequence of ill-doing and the other is the consequence of well-doing. The suffering that results from ill-doing is chastisement. The suffering that results from well-doing is enrichment—the spiritual enrichment of our own lives and the lives of those to whom we minister. Every time the believer gets out of the will of God, he suffers. Like a wise and loving father, God chastens him for his profit (Heb. xii. 5-11). Much of this kind of suffering may be avoided by hearkening to God and walking in obedience to His holy will. But even when the believer abides in Christ and walks in the "comfort of the Holy Ghost,"

he will have much affliction and tribulation. This kind of suffering cannot be avoided. It is the divine lot of the Christian. It is this second kind of suffering which Paul speaks of in this chapter. Such suffering and affliction come that we may "know the God of all comfort" and that we may minister spiritual comfort to others. Let us consider the twofold purpose of our "suffering with Christ":

First, The spiritual enrichment of our own lives.

This enrichment consists in part of a better knowledge of God. The names of God are revelations of His character. They also express relationships which we may sustain to Him. To know God as a given name reveals Him, we must meet the conditions of knowledge implied by that name. Thus, to know Christ as a Saviour one must realize that he is a sinner. He only can experience salvation who has felt the guilt and known the power of sin. The "God of peace" can only be known by him whose mind has been distracted and whose heart has been distressed. In like manner the only way to know "the God of all

comfort" is to feel the need of comfort. For this reason trials and afflictions are allowed to come to us that we may learn to know "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

It is a common experience for a faithful Christian to meet a severe trial or bitter affliction. Perhaps it is a business reverse or a domestic bereavement. It may be that an injury is sustained or that health is lost. The first feeling that comes at such a time is that perhaps one is not right with God, and that this is a judgment for disobedience. Satan is apt to suggest unkind or unjust thoughts of God's love and care. Of course, such afflictions do come as chastisements, when a Christian is out of the will of God. But the experience now described is not of that character. There is no consciousness of departure in any way from the path of obedience, while the sense of fellowship with Christ is unbroken. What is the explanation of such an experience? Why, beloved, the Lord is teaching you to know Him in a deeper way. He has permitted the dark trial to come to you that He may reveal Himself to you as the God of all comfort. It

may be that you have been praying to know Him more fully. Well, accept this, then, as the answer to your prayer. Of course, the better knowledge of the Lord has not come in the way you expected, but it has come in the way that is best for you. Maybe you expected a vision of Christ, or the opening of the Word in a marked way by the Spirit. There is a knowledge of God to be obtained by contemplation, by prayer, and by the devout study of the Scriptures. But there is also a knowledge of God that can only be gained through trial and suffering. For this reason the Lord puts us through the "furnace of affliction." He lets us get into tight places that we may know Him as the "God of deliverance."

Again, this enrichment of our lives consists also in the development of a more Christ-like character.

There are fruits of the Spirit that grow only in the soil of sorrow and suffering. Some varieties of apples are ripened only by the rough October blast. Their flavor and mellowness are produced by the fall winds. Self-reliance is developed in a boy by throwing

him upon his own resources. The soldier learns to be courageous by facing the enemy in battle. In like manner, some of the most essential graces of Christian character are developed by what are called adverse conditions. Thus untested faith is worthless. Peter assures us that it is the *trial* of our faith that is more precious than gold. Again, patience grows in the soil of irritating and annoying surroundings. Long-suffering, too, springs into full bloom amid natural causes of great provocation. In a word we have to pass through experiences which furnish the conditions of developing Christ-likeness of character in its symmetry and maturity. To escape sorrow and suffering is to lack the depth and ripeness of character which only sorrow and suffering can produce. To know Christ's strength we must feel our own weakness; to know Christ's joy we must experience earth's sorrow; to know the consolation of Christ we must be made partakers of His suffering.

However, the experience of this darker side of life should not be invited or sought; but when the Lord in His wisdom sends it, accept

it as a necessary process of transforming you into the image of Christ. Do not begin to fear that something is wrong, but rejoice that everything is right. For it is only those who are right with God who are called to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may rejoice with exceeding joy (I. Pet. iv. 12, 13).

Second, The enrichment of the lives of others.

The divine order as expressed to Abraham was, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. xii. 1, 2). Thus the refrain of a well-known hymn runs: "Bless me, Lord, and make me a blessing."

The Lord first enriches our own lives through the experiences of trial and suffering, and then uses us to enrich the lives of others who are in similar circumstances. As fast as the grapes ripen on our vine, their juice is to be

pressed out for the refreshment and sustenance of others.

One channel for our enrichment of other lives is the ministry of the Word. There is a marked difference between preaching the Gospel from a theoretical knowledge and preaching it from an experimental knowledge—a difference noticeable in spirit, method and result. In a sketch of the life of the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, Dr. A. T. Pierson wrote: "No man can preach *with power* one step beyond his own personal experience. One may truthfully and beautifully portray the Gospel of Christ, but if it only comes from his head, it will not have much influence with his hearers. Somehow a hearer, even when unconverted, can always tell when a preacher speaks from his heart. There is a certain ring about a heart message that cannot be mistaken. If a preacher feels the power of what he is saying his hearers will feel the power of it, too. Consequently, if a minister or Christian worker wants to preach a Gospel of grace and comfort to those who are in tribulation, he himself also, through tribulation, must have learned to know

the God of all grace and comfort. There is no other way, and there is no substitute. If one's messages are to be helpful to others, he must not only be taught of the Spirit in the deep things of God, but he must also be trained in the school of discipline and suffering.

Another channel through which we enrich other lives is the ministry of personal dealing. In the public ministration of the Word, one who portrays an experience of grace to which he himself has not yet attained may indeed help other lives, for God will always bless His Word, no matter who may proclaim it. But in personal and private contact with souls who are struggling with the problems of severe trial and suffering, such a one will find himself helpless. Then it is that words of comfort sound hollow, unless they flow from a heart that has in similar straits been comforted by God. Our ability to bless others in personal dealing is measured by the extent to which we ourselves have been blessed of God. We cannot give what we have not received. We cannot teach others lessons that we have not learned.

A young man just out of the theological seminary became the pastor of a large church. He had a fair knowledge of the Scriptures and had an earnest desire to help his people in public and in private to live conscientious and consecrated lives for God. But he lacked experience. Soon a family in his church was bereaved of a little child, and he went to comfort the stricken parents. He talked very beautifully of the love of God and His sustaining grace, but somehow he felt that his words did not reach their hearts. Later he himself lost a little one. Then he knew what loneliness and sorrow death brings, and in his distress he found his way to the heart of the God of all comfort. Afterward, when he went to the house of mourning, he found that his presence brought cheer and his words brought comfort. The few words that he spoke touched sore hearts, and somehow the glistening eye and tender handclasp went even further than his words. He knew from experience, and he knew also how to minister the comfort where-with he himself had been comforted of God.

Beloved, the prayer of us all is that we may

bless others. We all long to do something that will help those around us. Well, the strange trials and the severe suffering which we endure are God's answers to our prayers. Look at your sorrows and afflictions in this light, and it will glorify them. It often happens that one who has just passed through severe affliction is called by the Spirit to minister to one who is passing through a similar trial. If you had not experienced that sore affliction, my friend, you could not have helped that brother or that sister in similar distress. Don't shrink, then, from the fiery furnace! Endure patiently a great fight of affliction. Never mind if you struggle against foes without and fears within. Remember that it is not only enriching your life, but preparing you to enrich the lives of others. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same afflictions which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation" (II. Cor. i. 5, 6).

AN EXPECTED END

“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer. xxix. 11).

THERE is nothing more wonderful than the power of thought. Some scientists would have us believe that thought is the product of materialism; that “the brain secretes thought just as the liver secretes bile.” But thought is the working of an intelligent mind, one of the powers of personality. Even more wonderful than man’s thought is God’s thought. In God thinking is proof of personality. What God’s thoughts are we see in the achievements of the divine mind; for the Lord, *to think* is *to do*. The vastness and variety of creation with all its beauty and grandeur; man with his wonderful, composite nature, body, soul and spirit; the cross of Christ with the salvation from sin it provides; the Christian Church with its variety and richness of gifts and

graces;—these are some of the thoughts of God.

This little verse tells us three things about the thoughts of God, viz., their *object*, their *nature* and their *goal*.

First, The object of God's thoughts.

Even more wonderful than the thoughts of God is the object of His thoughts as revealed in this verse. "I know the thoughts that I think toward *you*." Man is the object of the divine thought; not man in his original state of righteousness, but man in his fallen state of sin. There would be nothing surprising about God's thinking of Adam who was made in His image; but there *is* something surprising indeed, in God's thinking of the poor sinner in whom the divine image has been effaced. Yes, beloved, God's thoughts are turned toward you and me; for we have only to write our names instead of the word "you" in this verse to get the spiritual meaning.

But why are the thoughts of God toward you and me? Well, one reason is because He loves us. God loves you and me. What a familiar statement this is; yet if we fully real-

ized it our hearts would be thrilled with joy and gratitude. Another reason that God's thoughts are toward us is that Christ died for us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." God loves us because we have cost Him so much,—the gift of His only begotten Son. If you and I had been the only poor helpless sinners in the whole world, Christ would still have died for us. This statement must be true for Jesus taught that the value of one soul was greater than that of the whole world. The third reason that God's thoughts are toward us is that the Holy Spirit indwells us. You know how much money and time we spend in making our homes comfortable and beautiful. We lay down soft carpets, adorn the walls with attractive pictures, and, in fact, put in all the modern conveniences and comforts that we can afford. We take all this care just because we live in our homes; they are the constant objects of our thought. Now, it is just because the Holy Spirit lives in us that God's thoughts are so constantly toward us. God is our home; but our hearts are His home; and He wants to

make the place of His abode pure and beautiful. This, then, explains why God's thoughts are turned toward man; he is the subject of God's love, the object of Christ's sacrifice, and the place of the Spirit's indwelling.

Second, The nature of God's thoughts.

It is comforting to know that God's thoughts are about us; but it is more comforting to know what the thoughts are which He is thinking toward us. In our little verse we are told that they are "thoughts of peace and not of evil." Indeed, we might have been assured that God's thoughts toward us were for our peace, from the fact, already seen, that He loves us, gave His Son to die for us, and has sent forth His Spirit into our hearts. If we have an enemy and hear that he is thinking about us we are quite sure that he is meditating evil. But God is not our enemy, but our friend; consequently we may be sure that all His thoughts toward us are for our good. "What," you say, "can it be true that this long delay in realizing my hopes, this severe trial through which I am passing, this dark pathway wherein I am treading, these strug-

gles and conflicts with the adversary, yes, and even the failure which discourages me and the defeat which threatens—is it true that all these things mean ‘*peace*’?” Yes, beloved; God says that His thoughts are upon us for our peace; and so these afflictions and perplexities of heart and mind must somehow be among the “all things” that are working together for good. In spite of our feelings and circumstances we must learn to put God’s estimate upon all the varied experiences of life. It did not seem to mean “peace” for Joseph when he was cast into prison; yet long afterwards he told his brethren that, while they meant their act for evil, “God meant it unto good.” It surely didn’t look like “peace” for Moses when after setting himself up as the deliverer of his people God sent him to the backside of the desert for forty years. Yet the wilderness was his school of discipline and experience to train him to be the lawgiver and military leader of Israel. Reverently we may say that it did not seem to be God’s thought of “peace” for Jesus that He should be rejected and crucified by the Jews, yet this was the pathway through

which He secured eternal salvation for mankind.

Likewise we may count our life at the present moment, even though every evidence contradicts it, one that is making for our peace. Approaching Jersey City by the Erie road one suddenly plunges into a long, dark tunnel. From the bright sunlight the train enters a damp, dank hole in the ground. One who had never entered New York by this route might feel bewildered for a moment. He had just seen the buildings and ascending smoke of the city; he seemed almost at his destination. Suddenly, however, he is whirled into the earth and the bright vision is blotted out. What does it mean? Why, going through that tunnel is the only way to get into New York. It looks certainly like a thought of evil thus to have one's hopes apparently buried in the ground; but it is really a thought of peace, for presently the train emerges from the tunnel and the sparkling river and the towering buildings of the great city lie spread out before the eyes. The tourist is in New York.

Third, The goal of God's thoughts.

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, *to give you an expected end.*" It has already been anticipated that the goal toward which God's thoughts of peace concerning us are making is to give us an expected end. The American Revised Version renders "to give you hope in your latter end." Literally the Hebrew means, "an end and an expectation." By paraphrasing this expression its significance can be brought out in a number of ways: to give you the end that you have expected; to give you the end that you have waited for; to give you the end that you have desired. In a word, the thought or purpose of God in our lives is to work out that very end which both He and we most desire. Of course, it is not the end of a worldly ambition; for the children of God are supposed to have given up the gratification of selfish aims. It is the expected end that God has put into your heart, the full apprehension of all that for which you have been apprehended by Christ Jesus. The Jews to whom this word of comfort came were in captivity in Babylon. The seventy years were

slowly wearing away; the people were growing restless under their restraint; and were beginning to build their hopes on assurances of speedy deliverance which false prophets were holding out. To them the word of the Lord comes in a letter from Jeremiah in Jerusalem. The Lord had not forgotten them. He promises deliverance from captivity and restoration to the promised land. This was the goal of His purpose and of their hope; but it could not be brought to pass till the seventy years had run their full course. Meanwhile, even the hardships and deprivations of captivity were making for their peace. This is the historic setting of the verse; and it finds illustration not only in Biblical examples, but in Christian experience. Look again at Joseph and Moses. Pharaoh's prison was Joseph's tunnel; it was God's way to the throne of Egypt. The backside of the desert was Moses' tunnel; he was forty years going through it; but it was the shortest cut God had to fit Moses for national leadership. Gethsemane and Golgotha were the dark but necessary pathway to the resurrec-

tion and the ascension. "As He is so are we in this world."

Instead of a tunnel some of us may be going through a funnel. The only way to get out is through the little end. This means subtraction and contraction on our part. We must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. The big capital letter "I" will surely stick in the funnel; the only way out for us is *to die out*.

Beloved, God's thought is toward you and His will is for you. The expected end of your heart's desire is a consummation which means far more to Him than it does to you. Indeed, your very expectation is from Him (Ps. lxii. 5). It was He who put the expected end in your heart. "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it, until the day of Christ Jesus." If the Lord has called you to the mission field you will surely get your expected end. Though the vision tarry long yet wait for its fulfilment; it will surely come. You don't want your "expected end" before it is God's time. Do not be indifferent nor impatient. Do not hinder nor hasten God. Keep in step

each day with His known will for you. Count the days and months not a delay but a waiting time; a waiting *for* God. A premature realization of your hopes might frustrate God's purpose. You cannot afford to lose any needed lesson. Is it not enough for you to know that you are in His will whether you are in active service or in patient waiting or even in severe suffering? Meanwhile, be of good cheer. Comfort thyself in the knowledge that God's thought is toward thee, He is working for thy peace, and will give thee thy expected end.

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